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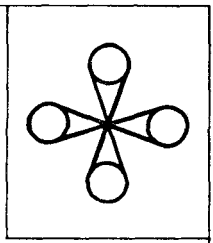

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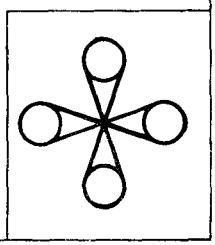

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Makers and Persons

I

I BEGIN WITH A TRUISM. Every maker is also a person. Everyone who makes works of art, which once made project themselves into a quasi-independent life, is also a unique individual, who lives a life unlike all other lives, parts of which a part at least of himself would rather the world did not know. But the maker is fated to quarry in himself as person. He must, because he has no other quarry. Even what he reads, or what he is told or observes or guesses of other men, are really as much parts of his person—once they have gone through that digestive process which alone can turn them into works of art—as those things which, in everyday language, we think of as "private" or "personal": question-begging words which one would like to avoid, if it were possible. He has to make himself a motley to the view, sell cheap what is most dear. He must, in so far as he is a maker, be something of an exhibitionist.

But the practice of his art—which alone makes him unlike other men—provides him with many ways in which to perform his exhibitions, and some ways in which they will not seem to be exhibitions at all—or so he may hope. These ways differ in the distances, or apparent distances, which they set between person and maker. The first is:

(1) *Direct.* This is a simple transcript from person to maker. It professes to be untouched and undisguised; its profession may be genuine or it may be, partly, faked. This is the way of the autobiographers, of Boswell, Pepys, Rousseau in his *Confessions,* Byron in his letters and journals, Montaigne. But even here, in this which is apparently the simplest relationship of all, all things are not entirely simple. Shame may enter: Pepys records what he is ashamed of, not in English but in a self-made dialect of Anglo-Franco-Spanish—not a disguise, in reality, but clearly the acknowledgement that there *should* be a disguise. But acknowledgement to whom, disguise from whom? Acknowledgement to himself alone, I suppose, and disguise from his respectable self alone—

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since the Diary was written only for his own reading and since no literate person is likely to be puzzled by such entries as "I did speak to her and she to me, and did get her pour dire me où she demeurs now, and did charge her para say nothing of me that I had vu elle." Such falsification, if it is that, is at least simple, its motive unmistakable. Subtler minds—Montaigne's and Byron's—are aware of subtler difficulties. Montaigne's solution—his solution on paper, that is, for we do not know his solution in reality—was simply to put down everything and confess that he understood nothing, that he could not make head or tail of the person whom he, as maker, was presenting. Byron, with the same perception of the self's multiplicity and contradictiveness, saw also the self's dishonesty. "But I fear," he writes at the beginning of his journal, "one lies more to one's self than to anyone else." To be honest about one's self's being dishonest about oneself: that, he suggests, is the best one can do. Perhaps it is. Even the most amateur keeper of the most genuinely private journal knows how the journal strives to develop a life of its own, how hard it is to keep the person-in-the-journal and the person-who-makes-the-journal always identical. This in the true amateur is simply the germ of what, in the real writer, is fully developed. For him the habit of making, the practice of standing aside a little and looking at the subject, has become incurable; Virginia Woolf, in her *Writer's Diary*, records her own agreement with Maupassant's remark that the writer can never be entirely unself-conscious, entirely "pure" in his responses, even to his own experiences. And in the real writer, who cannot write a line without a lurking suspicion (fear or hope or a blend of the two) that it may one day be read by others, the habit of public writing infects the private; he begins to "make" when he professes merely to record. The maker takes hold of the person and changes it. Walter Scott, who was both by temperament and by practice a completely impersonal and reticent writer, found this happening; he found his journal wanting to "make" him into a person different, he felt, from the real person, certainly different from what he wanted *his* real person to be. He ceased to write his journal for ten months because, as he put it, "I thought it made me abominably selfish; and that, by recording my gloomy fits, I encouraged their recurrence." But if the writer is of a different kind, if he does not share Scott's contempt for

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self-peddling and fear of the morbid, he will let the maker win, he will allow his person to be moulded as the maker wishes: and that not only in writing but in living also. He will "act" his made self till his made self is his real self, as Rimbaud did and Hugo and Dylan Thomas. Thomas, I have read, told a friend that he did not really like drinking; he drank because he "felt he ought to." His made self, and in due course his real self, was the divinely drunken bard. But Boswell is the perfect case. Boswell is the autobiographer's Platonic ideal, and he is so because in a sense he had no real person; he was nothing but a mirror, in which were reflected all images in the world about him. He was Old Tory Christian and Wilkesian rake, would-be guardsman and self-tormenting hypochondriac, Rousseau-ist sentimentalist and Johnsonian man of sense, Scottish laird descended from the Bruce and London gadabout ashamed of his daughter's Edinburgh accents. The maker in him projected, faithfully and impartially, each of his persons; the maker could never falsify, since no one of these persons could ever manage to defeat the others and claim to be the "real" person. Maker and person are identical because the person always surrenders to the maker. But such identity seems very rare; it calls for a total failure of purpose and will-power in one direction, in shaping the person to a desired end and holding it in that shape, and a total success in another, in the dogged and shameless recording of the person's failures. Most autobiographers, like most of the rest of humanity, are partial failures and partial successes; and therefore it may be suspected that most autobiographies, however "pure" and honest they may claim and intend to be, are in fact neither the one nor the other.

After the *Direct* comes: (2) The *Masked.* This is the making of a self which pretends not to be, but which encourages the reader to think it is, the person of the writer: in fact it may be very near to the person, or it may be no more than a chosen and exploited part of him. Conrad and Sterne are exemplars. Conrad invents a teller of his own stories called Marlow; "his own stories," some of them, meaning things which had really happened to the person Conrad, as in *Heart of Darkness* and *Youth.* These stories, which were true, are presented as if they were fiction by a personage who *is* fictional but who is close to the true protagonist of the real events. An odd complication: what were its motives, what its

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effects? Conrad, as a writer, had some special problems. He was a Pole who wrote in English about Englishmen; he was a highly sensitive ingenious contemplative writer, who (at least in the stories told by Marlow) was using the convention of the oral anecdote spontaneous and unformed. Marlow solved some of these problems for his creator. He was English, not Polish; being presented as a former sailor who had retired from the sea—here he "is" Conrad—he could, as it were, hide Conrad's personal experience even while narrating it; and the pretence that he is merely telling a tale to a group of friends excuses—in fact, necessitates for artistic reasons—a certain vagueness at the centre, a doubt of what it all really means—for the doubt can be given to Marlow, not to Conrad. "We knew," says the preamble to *Heart of Darkness,* "that we were fated to hear yet another of Marlow's inconclusive experiences." "Inconclusive" gives it away: the keynote of all these Marlow-told stories of Conrad's experiences. It is not a defect; it is clearly an effect intended; but no such inconclusiveness will be found in *Nostromo* or *The Secret Agent,* which have no invented narrator. In her essay on Conrad in *The Common Reader,* Virginia Woolf suggested that Marlow, in his latter days, became a trifle "sedentary", rather too far removed from the events and people he described—too much like Conrad the writer retired from the sea. Perhaps she was right. At least I would hazard the generalization that such "inconclusiveness" is always liable to occur in these masked persons and therefore, to some degree, in the works of which they are the centres; and the reason is the difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of preventing a kind of wobble between the person and the mask.

In Sterne, my other exemplar, the wobble is unmistakable. Sterne, in *Tristram Shandy,* has two masks. Tristram is that side of his person which was Bohemian, Rabelaisian, complacently incompetent at the ordinary business of living: Yorick is the sentimental parson, knowing himself doomed to an early death, the cultivator of the tearful smile. Of both these masks, and of the temperaments they stood for, Sterne made a cult alike in writing and in living: the "Shandean" game, a self-conscious system of the nonsensical, was the cult of the former, the sentimental of the latter. If one looks at the book, at *Tristram Shandy,* two things are clear: the masks are not always kept distinct—the feel-

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ings proper to Yorick spill over into Tristram—and the work as a whole, for that reason, degenerates. Its first four books or so are magnificent: firm, tight, consistent, held in the microcosm of the Shandy household, everything seen through Tristram's character. Then it begins to go to pieces; the scene widens, it takes in a journey to France in search of health—which was Sterne's journey—and sentiment becomes nauseating in the story of Le Fever. *Tristram Shandy,* which was published in instalments over a period of nine years, at the beginning of which its author was unknown, in the course of which he became famous, bears witness in its own progress to the course of its maker's life while he made it. He was lionized in the London drawing-rooms, living a life of fevered activity, consumption and sentiment simultaneously gaining on him; his failure to hold his masks was a symptom of his person's insincerity and weakness. In life as in writing, he could never keep the balance which alone can make a creation out of parts of oneself; he slid from one pose to the next, from bawdy to sobstuff and back again, not through choice but through weakness. *Tristram Shandy* shows how that happened in his writing; it happened equally in his life. When he was twenty-seven, he wrote this affecting passage in a letter to Miss Lumley, who was to become his wife:

> Fanny had prepared me a supper . . . but I sat over it with tears; a bitter sauce, my Lydia, but I could eat it with no other—for the moment she began to spread my little table, my heart fainted within me.—One plate, one knife, one fork, one glass . . .

When he was fifty-four, he wrote in his journal for Elizabeth Draper, with whom he was in love, this passage, which must in justice be considered equally affecting:

> I have just been eating my Chicking, sitting over my repast upon it with tears—a bitter Sause—Eliza! but I could eat it with no other—when Molly spread the tablecloth, my heart fainted within me—one solitary plate—one knife and fork—one glass!

This raises a host of fascinating problems. Did Sterne remember, almost word for word, what he had written twenty-seven years earlier, or did he dig out the old love-letter and copy it, with minor changes (rather skilful ones, which make the whole scene more dramatic, more "real"), for the new love-affair? Did the

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scene described really take place on both occasions, or did it happen the first time but not the second, or was it invented for both? If it happened both times, did it arise, spontaneously, twice, or did Sterne deliberately stage it the second time because he remembered it, and then what he had written of it, twenty-seven years before? Was his reproduction of the earlier passage entirely cynical, or did he feel that the second experience was just as genuine, and exactly the same, as the first, and therefore could be honestly rendered in the same words? Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that here in the journal written for one individual Sterne is posing, masking, dramatising with a blurred and shifting insincerity no different from that of the published book. He was clearly a born self-divider, a player of himself to himself; in the journal for Eliza, the dramatising is conscious and continuous. "I" alternates with "he", and there are passages like this:

> There want only the Dramatis Personae for the performance—the play is wrote—and scenes are painted—and the curtain ready to be drawn up:—the whole Piece waits for thee my Eliza.

This, perhaps, is one type of temperament which turns naturally to the self-presentation by mask, which turns to it for reasons more personal than aesthetic, more forced than chosen.

In this masked kind of self-presentation, it seems usual that the mask is also the teller, presented in the first person. Dickens' David Copperfield is another; so is Proust's "je". Proust changed his mind; in *Jean Santeuil,* his first draft, the mask is "he". I do not know if he gave for that change any aesthetic reason; there may have been personal reasons, such as the fact that his mother, when *Jean Santeuil* was written, was still alive. But the effect of the first person, when the teller is the mask of the writer, seems always the same; it makes the "I" the least clear, least realised, person in the book. The intricate self-analyses of Marcel's feelings for Albertine leave me, for one, less and less sure, the longer those analyses grow, of what they are really telling; but I have no doubt at all why Charlus or St. Loup behave as they do. Or of what they look like, and the tricks of their physical behaviour: whereas I think it is true to say that there is not a single description, throughout the whole chronicle, of Marcel's appearance. We may think we know what he looked like; but in fact that knowl-

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edge has come from the host of gossipers and biographers, photographs and portraits, of Proust the person. We read nowadays not Proust's work by itself, but Proust's work and his life together. The latter supplies what the maker left out. The question is: did he mean to leave it out? Or is it the inevitable result, when the masked self is also the teller? I suspect the latter: as inevitable as a man's inability to hear his own voice as others hear it. David Copperfield also is faceless, colourless, characterless: in all *David Copperfield,* the only nonentity.

Farther still from the person is the third kind of self-presentation: (3) The *Mythologised.* This is a transposition of the person into symbolic figures, references, etc., which may be taken from events private in the person's experiences and therefore not known to the reader (unless the writer explains them), or may be taken from external sources—from books, other men's experiences, and so forth. The latter, as well as the former, may be unknown to the reader (again, unless the writer explains them); even if the reader manages to identify them, he cannot know their points of contact with the writer's person, which gave them their potency for him. The writer stakes all on giving to his symbols a power strong enough to overcome the reader's ignorance—and also, which is harder, the reader's curiosity; the method commits him to making a construction of symbols so watertight that there is no "leakage of interest" (in James's phrase) from the made work to the person who made it. Of this method—which is perhaps a characteristically modern method—the master is certainly Mr. Eliot, theorist and practitioner of the "objective correlative". But even in him, does it really work?—work, that is, in the sense of achieving the complete self-sufficiency which its user has set as its object? His own wry confession would seem to prove that it does not work, that readers will insist on looking outside the work for the person—and on finding him, which is worse, in the wrong places. "I am used," he laments in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," "... to having my personal biography reconstructed from passages which I got out of books, or which I invented out of nothing because they sounded well; and to having my biography invariably ignored in what I *did* write from personal experience." That, of course, can be blamed, as Mr. Eliot seems to blame it, on the reader—on the weak-minded reader who cannot suppress his

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source-hunting and gossip-column interest. But I do not, myself, feel inclined to shoulder all the blame. Take a particular instance —this fragment from the prose preamble to "Burbank with a Baedeker": "So the countess passed on till she came through the little park, where Niobe presented her with a cabinet, and so departed." The reader confronted with that may be ignorant or may be knowing; if he is ignorant, he must take what he can from the words alone, giving them whatever relevance he can think of to the poem which follows. If he is knowing—if he happens to be aware, or is told, that it comes from a stage-direction in an excessively obscure masque by John Marston—he may seek in that provenance some further explanation. (He is not very likely to find it.) In the first case, he will make an interpretation which can hardly fail to be arbitrary and personal (to himself); in the second, he will add to that a series of speculations, interested or irritated: why did he (the author) put *that* in here? what's the connection for *him*? what does it mean to him and to this particular poem? These speculations, of course, are leaving the work and going to the person who made the work, and may well be doing so without justification and in the wrong directions: precisely what Mr. Eliot complained of. I suggest that he asked for it—that his method invites what it seeks to exclude. It does so because it sets itself an impossible objective: the objective of being at the same time "personal" in one sense—a construction made to individual measure, not taken off the peg of a known convention—and "impersonal" in another sense, in the sense of the "objective correlative". The first quality is perpetually raising questions which destroy the second; for either the author must give his own explanations, which, to be complete, would have to include indications of those points where his biography *does* enter in, or, if he does not explain, he must expect that his readers will do it for him. He must then accept, in pained or amused silence, his readers' erratic guesses: or repudiate them—telling what is wrong, but not what is right. This, on the whole, is Mr. Eliot's tactic. He tells us that he finds "incomprehensible" I. A. Richards' remark that he (Mr. Eliot) had "effected a complete severance between his poetry and *all* beliefs": he does not tell us *why* he finds it incomprehensible or what Dr. Richards should have said. And he lets the contributors to *Essays in Criticism* wallow in an orgy of

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contradictory explanations about "A Cooking Egg." But whether he explains himself, or is explained by others, does not much matter: in either case, the maker's exclusion of the person is defeated, the self-sufficiency of the construction is lost. The same has happened with Joyce's *Ulysses*. There seems to be an irony in the business; for the more these mythologised self-presentations repudiate interpretation in terms of the person, the more, in reality, they receive it: think of all the commentaries on Joyce's Dublin, Joyce's relations with his family and his religion, Joyce's this that and the other, which *Ulysses* has begotten. The only way, perhaps, by which such works really do what they set out to do is the austere way of remaining completely hermetic: as Mallarmé did. The price paid for taking that way is the price of being incomprehensible. Otherwise, the thing is a phantom, though perfectly capable, like many another phantom in the history of literary theory, of giving birth to works of real and lasting beauty. But not, in my own judgment, to works of the greatest quality: the method remains a rather desperate expedient, a perpetually anxious *tour de force,* the result, presumably, of what Jung called the modern world's "impoverishment of myth." In the absence of acceptable myths which all his public will know, the maker must invent his own.

The last way is: (4) The *Dramatised.* In this, the distance is greatest between maker and person: ideally, the person is not there at all. He *is* there, of course, in reality: as I started by saying, he has to be. But in drama he is filtered through two sieves, and what emerges from those sieves is remoter, less certain, less obtrusive than in other forms. The first sieve lies in the fact that the drama's characters must be self-explanatory in their actions and their sayings—whereas in the novel, or the narrative poem, the opportunity is always there for the writer to comment and explain and tell the reader how such and such a character or episode ought to be taken: and that is where, in narrative, the personal usually enters. The only possible point of entry for it into the drama is through that element which Aristotle called the "thoughts", the moral-philosophical reflections which the characters make on what is going on; but since these reflections are uttered *by* the characters, it is always highly unreliable to take them as reflections of the author. In the novel's characters, compared with the

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drama's, the umbilical cord is not cut; it is therefore easier to let the personal pass through if the writer wishes it to do so, and harder to prevent it from doing so if it wants to though the writer does not.

The second sieve through which the personal must pass lies in the demands of the plot in drama: much stricter than in the novel, for the novel can make do with the minimum of plot, or with a plot which makes itself up as it goes on, but the drama can not dispense with an artificial skeleton clear, firm, and known from the start. And a plot once made—though personal reasons may have existed at its choice or making—is in itself impersonal: a mere synopsis, a neutral thing which anyone can use. The drama, in fact, does what the novel hardly does at all: it borrows its stories, it shares the same story among a number of dramatists. The choice may be restricted, as in Greek drama, to a small range of traditional themes; or it may be, as in Elizabethan, a choice more or less unfettered, an eclectic picking-up of stories from whatever source comes to hand. Shakespeare, presumably, chose his stories usually from purely external reasons (their immense variety proves it)—from reasons of craftsmanship, or under orders from the theatre management, or with an eye to the audience's tastes at the moment, or through pure chance. Whichever it be—whether the choice be wide or restricted—it is clear that the personal can come in only through the treatment, not through the story itself; it comes in as a "leakage", always doubtful and probably unintended. There may be some such leakages in the Shakespearean plays written about the same time as the Sonnets, or a little later than them—there seem to be echoes and correspondences there; it is thought by some that Euripides' *Alcestis* was meant to convey to a few initiates, under the conventional myth which the majority would take at its face value, an attitude of critical scepticism which was Euripides' own[1]; we know that Ibsen intended *An Enemy of the People,* which portrays the hypocrisy of respectable burghers at the discovery that the water-supply for the town's new swimming-pool is polluted, as an allegory of the public's reception of *Ghosts:* but these, even if they were all proved, would be exceptions. The rule is that the drama is of all forms the most resistant to the demands of the personal.

[1] Cf. A W. Verrall's *Euripides the Rationalist.*

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There are other reasons for this. The drama—certainly the true drama, really written for a theatre, and I refuse to call the kind of play "not intended for the stage" a real drama at all—obliges the writer, more than any other form, to keep his eye on the people who are to take what he has made—on his audience: hence, he has so much less opportunity to keep an eye on himself. Moreover, the true stage-drama *must* be immediately comprehensible on one level at least; the private-symbolic cannot be allowed to run riot, whether the writer would like it to or not. It may be that wider issues are involved here, that this close relationship between audience and dramatist, on which success in drama depends, depends itself on the theatre's being a true microcosm of its society: the ages of great drama, such as the Athenian, the Elizabethan, and the French of the *Grand Siècle,* do seem to have been ages in which the drama catered for and represented an unusually close-knit and homogeneous society, one in which the individual, if he succeeds in finding himself a niche at all, is likely to be reasonably comfortable in it. I would be inclined to risk the generalization that the kind of writer who becomes a dramatist is less likely than imaginative writers of other kinds to make a mess, even if it be an interesting mess, of his personal life—is more likely to be a balanced, successful person. If this is true, it may be accounted for from either side. Such persons may *choose* the drama because they have less need to compensate for the person's private failure by exhibiting it as something perversely to be proud of: or else the fact that they have to accommodate themselves to a shared and communal art may incidentally discipline them until they *are* balanced and successful persons.

II

I began by saying that the maker must be something of an exhibitionist. With some, this causes no distress; the person also is an exhibitionist. He has a natural urge to project himself on to a larger screen than that of his individual life; he makes a creation out of his self and its peculiarities, as Byron did and Burns and Gide. But with some, the exhibitionism of the maker causes acute distress to the person; the latter revolts, ineffectively, against it; there is a continual tension between them, which

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issues, now and then, in explosive or plaintive protests. This tension, I believe—or at least the expression of it—is a fairly new thing: not older than the last hundred and fifty years or so. It comes from the slowly growing, now immense, interest in the maker's person: from the trickle, stream, flood of biographies, biographical criticism, reminiscences, published letters and journals, and so forth. If I had to give a date for the start of that flood, at least in English, I should pick on 1791, the date of the publication of Boswell's *Johnson*. When Boswell claimed that his work was something new, a completer picture of a man than had ever been made before, he knew what he was claiming: and he was right. "I am absolutely certain that *my* mode of biography, which gives not only a *history* of Johnson's *visible* progress through the world, and of his publications, but a *view* of his mind in his letters and conversations, is the most perfect that can be conceived, and will be *more* of a *Life* than any work that has yet appeared."[2] The reactions of contemporary readers proved how right he was. They were intrigued; but they were shocked. The priggish distaste of Mary Wollstonecraft was by no means untypical. "But the hills and dales, clouds and sunshine, conspicuous in the virtues of great men, set off each other; and though they afford envious weakness a fairer mark to shoot at, the real character will still work its way to light, though bespattered by weak affection, or ingenious malice." This resounding sentence from *Rights of Woman* has a footnote: "I allude to various biographical writings, but particularly to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*." But Boswell, of course, was not the only offender. Nothing is more revealing of the new interest in the maker's person than the Gadarene rush into print, after Johnson's death, with gossip about him. And Boswell, at least, was quite unscrupulous; he knew that Johnson would have hated what he was doing to his memory—knew it because Johnson had told him so, on the Hebridean tour. "It might be printed," said Johnson after reading Boswell's manuscript during the tour, "were the subject fit for printing." And this revelation of his own betrayal in printing Boswell, quite shamelessly, printed. The last great monument of the old discretion was the new curiosity's first victim. The taste grew in the following

[2] Letter to Temple, 24th February 1788.

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decades. Scott grumbled at it, at what he called "the age's desire, or rather rage, for literary history and private anecdote," but his grumbles were in vain. 1816 is the date I would choose as the next landmark: the year of the great scandal of Byron's separation from his wife. This, I believe, was the first occasion when the reading-public took a Hollywood type of interest in a writer's person, when that interest was fanned by journalism, when the writer himself did all he could to fan it still further, while professing, of course, disgust and dismay. Those who still held by the old values—Scott, Wordsworth, Jane Austen, Peacock—looked on the business with pity or anger or contempt. Wordsworth and Scott it provoked to pondering on the kindred problem of the erratic genius in society; their letters of 1816 were full of it. Has the genius the right to claim exemption from the rules which ordinary men and women must adhere to? have we, his readers, the right, or the duty, to forget the person's failings when we read the maker's creations? These questions may have always existed, but they did not become urgent for the generality of readers until there was an abundance of publicity for the writers' personal lives. Jane Austen's heroine Charlotte in *Sanditon* (which was being written in the early months of 1817) is clear that she cannot, if she happens to know about the person, separate that knowledge from his works. "I am not poetic enough," she says, "to separate a Man's Poetry entirely from his Character; and poor Burns's known Irregularities greatly interrupt my enjoyment of his Lines." She says this to a person—a foolish baronet—who stands for the modern, the "advanced" opinion of the time and who proclaims the view that genius excuses all things. In this, it seems certain, Charlotte was expressing Jane Austen's own opinion. Even Peacock, more worldly, who himself had lived in the literary Bohemia of the Shelleyan circle, is nevertheless in basic agreement. "Sir," says his caricature of Byron in *Nightmare Abbey,* "I have quarrelled with my wife; and a man who has quarrelled with his wife is absolved from all duty to his country. I have written an ode to tell the people as much, and they may take it as they list." There is no sympathy in that caricature; there is nothing but an Augustan contempt for the washing of the person's dirty linen by the maker, for the striking of private atti-

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tudes in public print. When Moore destroyed Byron's memoirs, it was precisely the posthumous continuation of this that he was anxious to prevent (in fact, of course, his action provoked a new flood of it, which still flows). Elizabeth Barrett, a little later, is another protester; she writes indignantly to Miss Mitford in 1843 of the publication of something which had revealed the senile madness of Southey: "But even *I* shrink back from the publication of the fragment of a letter from Mrs. Southey showing how her husband had not written his own name for two years,—could scarcely be supposed to recognise her,—and had been shaken in health and partly in intellect since the insanity and death of his first love and wife, Edith! . . . Mr. Southey won't mind, perhaps,—but his children *will*—and we all start back before the lifting of the grave-cloth on a face more sacredly removed than by Death, from the public gazing."

The pattern is now clear: a steady growth of interest in the writer's person, a pushing back of the boundaries of privacy, and a stream of vain protest against it from the writers, the victims actual or potential. By the next crucial date—which is 1878—the whole thing is set in its mould; for in that year were published Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne. Matthew Arnold reacted as, by now, we can expect. "For the publication of the Letters to Fanny Brawne I can see no good reason whatever. Their publication appears to me, I confess, inexcusable; they ought never to have been published."[3] That is precisely how a goodly section of the contemporary literary world reacted to Malcolm Brinnin's *Dylan Thomas in America*. The resemblance is exact; for both works display their subjects and victims at what, to ordinary persons at least, appears to be their worst, and both Buxton Forman, who published Keats's letters, and Brinnin, deeply *admire* the writers whom, to other writers, they appear to be putting in the pillory; and each would presumably defend his action on these assumptions—that the maker's greatness is unaffected by the person's failings, that all knowledge concerning the person may be of relevance and value to the understanding of his creations, and that therefore his readers have a positive right to know everything and those in possession of evidence a positive duty to display it.

[3] "John Keats" in *Essays in Criticism*, Vol. II.

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With the last point, something like "scholarship" is entering the business; and clearly it is not irrelevant that in the last half of the nineteenth century English literature became an academic subject. There are authorities on particular tracts of it (Buxton Forman became *the* authority on Keats); there are theses about it, scholarly editions of it. I suspect that the dry-as-dust scholar, determined in the pursuit of truth to ferret out and to publish whatever he can, and the romantic poet, like Byron, exploiting his own personality, are not so remote from each other as they may appear. The kind of interest which the former feels for his chosen writer and feeds to his public is basically the same as that which the latter felt for himself and then, by the powerful infection of his genius, created in his public. But the scholar's determination to find out is apt to beget what becomes in fact an independently purposeful activity, whatever lip-service the scholars may still pay to what they will still call the ultimate purpose of it all, which is the better understanding of the writer's work. Maker-and-person, writer-and-creation, are thought of as composites; it is as if we, the public, said to the writer: "Because you have chosen to expose yourself in works of art (nobody *asked* you to write!), which works of art arouse our interest in you, you must expect that our interest is going to overflow till it covers the whole of you, or as much of that whole as we can get to know. That is the price you pay for arousing our interest."

That, I suspect, is an accurate rendering of the truth. Maker and person *do* form a composite; their separation is purely artificial, dependent on the preservation of a code of good manners (don't ask the wrong questions, don't ask too many questions) or on a successful covering-up by the maker himself. It may be accurate; but one can hardly blame the writers for resenting it. They have resented it. From the nineteenth century onwards, it becomes a common form: a fanatical reticence, a grim self-guarding, a fear and hatred of ghouls and gossips. Arnold and Meredith leave in their wills instructions that no biographies are to be made of them; Kipling, like others, leaves instructions for an "official", approved biography—which leads to the suppression of the first commissioned *Life* and its supersession by another, very guarded and very dull; Tennyson cuts down his private letters to

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the bare factual minimum;[4] Housman keeps unpublished in his lifetime—and would certainly, one imagines, have disapproved of their posthumous publication—a number of poems which state the real nature of his emotional life with none of the pastoral or military disguises adopted in those he printed; Oscar Wilde—perhaps with a foreboding of his own fate—writes a bad but heartfelt sonnet on the sale by auction of some of Keats's love-letters, "that small and furtive eyes may glare and gloat."

Such personal reactions are of no more than personal interest. What is of wider interest is the attempt by many writers to justify the personal reaction by claiming that it corresponds to the literary truth, that readers have not only no right, but also no need, to know about the person since his works live independently of him. One could make quite an anthology of such utterances, culled from an unlikely variety of sources. Here are some of them:

> The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates.

> Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it.

> The poet and the man are two different natures; though they exist together, they may be unconscious of each other, and incapable of deciding on each other's powers and efforts by any reflex act.

> To withdraw myself from myself (oh that cursed selfishness!) has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in scribbling at all.

> If I have given you delight
> By aught that I have done,
> Let me lie quiet in that night
> Which shall be yours anon:
> And for the little, little, span
> The dead are borne in mind,
> Seek not to question other than
> The works I leave behind.

The authors of these sayings are a very disparate group: Eliot, Lawrence, Shelley, Byron, Kipling. But all of them, it is clear,

[4] Johnson, the first victim, had been a pioneer in this reaction. In his last days he made a great burning of his letters and private papers; and he said to Boswell: "It is now become so much the fashion to publish letters that in order to avoid it, I put as little into mine as I can." But Boswell's reply was prophetic: "Do what you can, Sir, you cannot avoid it." (Boswell's *Life*, 8th May, 1781.)

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are saying the same thing. All of them, too, are writers of the last hundred and fifty years; I should doubt the likelihood of finding that thing said, that claim made, in earlier years, for in earlier years the need to assert it had hardly been felt.[5] But three of them at least—Shelley, Byron, and Lawrence—are writers whom one would hardly expect to make such a claim; for in all of them, if you have any knowledge both of their lives and of their works, it is impossible not to see a very close connection between the two. The claim they make is in fact untenable. Why then did they make it? I suspect, precisely because it *was* untenable: and they knew it. They know the truth—that their writing is in reality, and perhaps in many places where others cannot see it, a perpetual self-exposure, an endless self-acting; they know, too, better than anyone else can know it, what this has cost them in risks taken, pain accepted for themselves, wrongs done to others. And since they know it, it is natural that they should lay down what smoke-screen they can. What Byron wrote—"To withdraw myself from myself"—is remarkably close to another saying of Mr. Eliot's: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not an expression of personality but an escape from personality. . . ." Both poets, it may be thought, are expressing not an achievement but an aspiration: with the dead poet at any rate, we know beyond doubt that it was *only* an aspiration. And an aspiration which, the nearer he got to achieving it, was harmful to his art, because it was contrary to the truth of his art; for Byron wrote at his best when he abandoned the aspiration, when he gave up the Childe Harold poses and the attempts at drama and simply "wrote out his mood as it came to him" (the phrase is Virginia Woolf's) in the shameless self-parading of *Don Juan*.

So the makers appeal to their art to turn our attention from their persons. But the art itself betrays them. And their rage against the ghouls and the prying critics—however justified it may often be—is in truth a rage against their making selves, who alone gave to the ghouls both their stimulus and their material.

[5] What one *can* find in earlier years is the exact opposite, a boast by the "artist" that what he "created" is an unvarnished account of what the "man suffered". That was a stock claim (truthful or not) of the Renaissance sonnetteer: Petrarch made it, and Ronsard, and Sidney ("look in thy heart and write"), and Shakespeare. Perhaps they felt able to make it because they knew that no scholars would get to work on confirming its accuracy.

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III

All this leads, for critics, to two problems: one of method and one of morals. The problem of method is this. How essential, and how useful, is knowledge of the person to an understanding of his works? And the problem of morals is this. Are we justified in treating the maker's person as a quarry from which we may take and exhibit whatever we can find? or, if there is a limit, by what criteria is the limit to be fixed?

I do not know the answers. I wish I did. There is no problem for those who find themselves contented with either extreme in critical method: those at the one end who are satisfied to view the work with no reference to its maker, and those at the other who have neither ethical scruples about delving into the person's privacies nor intellectual doubts lest much of this delving should be satisfying the demands of the gossip rather than those of the reader of literature. Most modern criticism has tended to the former extreme; it is a common characteristic of the criticism of Eliot, Richards, Leavis and the Scrutineers, and the "New Criticism" in America, that biographical matter is almost totally excluded. The work is placed in a vacuum, which is then filled with the critic's responses; the extreme of this method, as exemplified by Richards' *Practical Criticism,* is to suppress even the author's identity. This was probably, in part at least, a reaction from what were felt to be the excesses of romantic criticism, which themselves were felt to be, as they certainly were, the product of excessive personality-culture in romantic art. And again, it may be thought to be an austere highbrow reaction against the general contemporary degradation of this personality-culture which one may see, if one wishes to, as much in almost all the biographical books about Lawrence as in the books about Dylan Thomas by Brinnin and Caitlin Thomas. And as such, one may highly approve. But ultimately, is it tenable? Its effect is to place the works examined in an artificial vacuum, an unreal isolation. It has two dangers. The first, the less important, is that of making sheer mistakes, caused by inadequate knowledge or inadequate use of knowledge, one of the functions of which ought to be to *set the limits of rational interpretation* by laying down cautionary principles: This particular writer, being the kind of man he was,

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working as he did, living in the age in which he lived, could *not,* whatever he meant, have meant *that.* To give two concrete examples, as they seem to me. A great deal of Wilson Knight's Shakespearean interpretations meet with stolid resistance from myself because I cannot believe that an Elizabethan, and an Elizabethan working in the medium and conditions which we know Shakespeare worked in, could possibly have organised his work as Wilson Knight's interpretations require that he must have done. And Dr. Leavis's putting of Pope's work in the line of "metaphysical wit" encounters in me a similar doubt because of the evidence which Pope's own rewriting of Donne's *Satires* affords of his radical difference from that very way of writing to which he is claimed to have some affinity. The second danger, which is more important—for particular judgments can always be argued about—is that of pretending a kind of interest which normal readers, I suspect, do not have—an interest about the work which does not lead to an interest about its maker. Mr. Eliot's recent arguments are of relevance here: à propos of Mr. Bateson's book on Wordsworth, which suggested incestuous feelings for Dorothy as the emotional mainspring of Wordsworth's work, Mr. Eliot asks plaintively if we really need any further light on the "Lucy" poems than that which is afforded by the beauty of the poems themselves. But is that, in fact, enough? is it as much as the really moved, the really interested, reader of those poems finds that he wants to have? My personal reaction is: no, it is not enough. *I* cannot read these poems as if they were not by Wordsworth. *I* cannot read them without finding my knowledge of Wordsworth's other poems, and of the whole of his mind, entering into my response to them. And I cannot read them without wanting to know more about them—not, simply and naively, to know "who Lucy was," but certainly to know what Wordsworth intended her to stand for. And I don't see how this curiosity is to be satisfied without knowing more about Wordsworth himself. And this desire to know more is not, I think, a going away from, an irrelevance to, the beauty and interest of the poems themselves; it is a result of those qualities, but for which the curiosity would not have been stimulated. Mr. Eliot's rhetorical question appears to me to evoke a reader whose existence I find hard to imagine: one with enough literary interest to read these particular poems and to

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respond to them, but not enough curiosity to wish to follow up his first impression.

This question is part of a larger one. Is there such a thing as a "pure" response to a work of imaginative literature, which is different and capable of isolation from one's interest in history, in human beings, in all sorts of other things? The criticism which ignores biography—it tends also to ignore any study of the social-historical background—does appear to postulate such a separation in practice, though in theory its practitioners would deny it. A similar attempt to separate, of a somewhat different order, may be seen in Dr. Richards' denunciation of "stock responses" in the reading of poetry and his requirement that a reader should come to each poem devoid of preconceptions. The ideal that that seems to imply is a reader who has never read any poetry before or one who succeeds, each time he is confronted with a new poem, in forgetting the previous ones. Like Mr. Eliot's, this is a reader whose existence I cannot believe in. For how can a "stock response" be formed unless there has been a stock to form it from? and once it *has* been formed, is it humanly possible to lay it, for a season, in cold storage? My own conviction is that these ideals are unnatural chimeras. I am therefore driven to reject the first extreme, which would solve our problem by largely ignoring the maker's person and also his background, which is an extension of his person, and to attempt the more difficult task of deciding where, if anywhere, the limits of useful biographical knowledge can be set.

And here I find that I cannot set any limits. It is easy to evolve a formula, which would run something like this: "Only that knowledge of the person is useful and therefore permissible which is relevant to the better understanding of the work; the work must always be the centre of our interest"—easy to lay down such a principle, and quite impossible to decide, except by one's own personal taste in each particular case, how the principle is to be applied. I do not see how one can arrive at any certainty about the morals of the matter—how one can say: "This is permissibly printable and that is not"—since the limit of permissibility in such things varies continually from age to age and from one civilisation to another. It is very different even now from one side of the Atlantic to the other (we don't have journals like *Confidential* in England, but perhaps we shall have some day), and an ancient

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Chinese would have been inexpressibly shocked if you had suggested that a famous poet had shown a lack of reverence for his grandparents' tombs, but would not have turned a hair of his pigtail if you had described in the utmost detail the poet's wantonings with his concubines. Even the standard which charity and commonsense might suggest as a guide—that nothing should be published while there are still persons alive who might be hurt by its publication—will not avail us in the last analysis; for a really devoted, really fanatical disciple could answer that the pain caused to a few was more than offset by the benefit conferred on the many, the many who would thereby be granted a better insight into the master's work: and given that that claim might be true in the particular case, of which the disciple could say that his judgment was as good as anyone's, then his argument would have to be admitted; for we do, in fact, accept that principle when we allow our doctors to experiment on living animals. Modern psychology has complicated the matter still further, and greatly contributed to this moral indeterminacy, with its suggestions that almost anything in human experience may have an effect on almost anything else and that the ways in which the effect is produced may be devious in the extreme; for that means that the investigator can never be entirely sure of what is relevant and what is not. And modern literature itself has contributed in no small measure to the prying activities which some of its practitioners deprecate—by being so excessively obscure. For the harder you are to understand, and the less you explain yourself, the more you are asking others to endeavour to explain you.

I am therefore left with the rather unsatisfactory conclusion that there is no conclusion: only, perhaps, two very general caveats for the critic, which are also caveats, to a slightly lesser degree, for the common reader. The first is that we ought to make quite sure, before we undertake the microscopic investigation of a writer, that he is, for ourselves, worth investigating—which means, that we have enjoyed and been impressed by his work. And the second caveat is that the ways in which the person affects and is revealed in his creations are enormously varied and subtle; the evidence, however lavish, is never, in the nature of things, complete; and it behoves us, therefore, however fearless we may be in our pryings, to be cautious in our conclusions.

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GALWAY KINNELL

The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World

Was diese kleine Gasse doch für ein Reich an sich war . . .

1

pcheek pcheek pcheek pcheek pcheek
They cry. The motherbirds thieve the air
To appease them. A tug on the East River
Blasts the bass-note of its passage, lifted
From the infra-bass of the sea. A broom
Swishes over the sidewalk like feet through leaves.
Valerio's pushcart Ice Coal Kerosene
Moves clack
clack
clack
On a broken wheelrim. Ringing in its chains
The New Star Laundry horse comes down the street
Like a roofleak whucking in a pail.
At the redlight, where a horn blares,
The Golden Harvest Bakery brakes on its gears,
Squeaks, and seethes in place. A propane-
gassed bus makes its way with big, airy sighs.

Across the street a woman throws open
Her window
She sets, terribly softly,
Two potted plants on the windowledge
tic tic
And bangs shut her window.

A man leaves a doorway tic toc tic toc tic toc tic hurrah
toc splat on Avenue C tic etc and turns the corner.

Banking the same corner
A pigeon coasts 5th Street in shadows,

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Looks for altitude, surmounts the rims of buildings,
And turns white.

The babybirds pipe down. It is day.

2

In sunlight on the Avenue
The Jew rocks along in a black fur shtraimel,
Black robe, black knickers, black knee-stockings,
Black shoes. His beard like a sod-bottom
Hides the place where he wears no tie.
A dozen children troop after him, barbels flying,
In skullcaps. They are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar,
Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher.
With the help of the Lord they will one day become
Courtiers, thugs, rulers, rabbis, asses, adders, wrestlers,
bakers, poets, cartpushers, infantrymen.

The old man is sad-faced. He is near burial
And one son is missing. The women who bore him sons
And are past bearing, mourn for the son
And for the father, wondering if the man will go down
Into the grave of a son mourning, or if at the last
The son will put his hands on the eyes of his father.

The old man wades towards his last hour.
On 5th Street, between Avenues A and B,
In sunshine, in his private cloud, Bunko Certified Embalmer,
Cigar in his mouth, nose to the wind, leans
At the doorway of Bunko's Funeral Home & Parlour,
Glancing west towards the Ukrainians, eastward idly
Where the Jew rocks towards his last hour.

Sons, grandsons at his heel, the old man
Confronts the sun. He does not feel its rays
Through his beard, he does not understand
Fruits and vegetables live by the sun.
Like his children he is sallow-faced, he sees
A blinding signal in the sky, he smiles.

Bury me not Bunko damned Catholic I pray you in Egypt.

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3

From the Station House
Under demolishment on Houston,
To the Power Station on 14th,
Jews, Negroes, Puerto Ricans
Walk in the spring sunlight.

The Downtown Talmud Torah
Blosztein's Cutrate Bakery
Areceba Panataria Hispano
Peanuts Dried Fruit Nuts & Canned Goods
Productos Tropicales
Appetizing Herring Candies Nuts
Nathan Kugler Chicken Store Fresh Killed Daily
Little Rose Restaurant
Rubinstein the Hatter Mens Boys Hats Caps Furnishings
J. Herrmann Dealer in All Kinds of Bottles
Natural Bloom Cigars
Blony Bubblegum
Mueren las Cucarachas Super Potente Garantizada de Matar las
Cucarachas mas Resistentes
Wenig
G. Schnee Stairbuilder
Ever youth la Original Loción Eterna Juventud Satisfacción o
Dinero Devuelto
Happy Days Bar & Grill
Through dust-stained windows over storefronts
Curtains drawn aside, onto the Avenue
Thronged with Puerto Ricans, Negroes, Jews,
Baby carriages stuffed with groceries and babies,
The old women peer, blessed damozels
Sitting up there young forever in the cockroached rooms,
Eating fresh-killed chicken, productos tropicales,
Appetizing herring, canned goods, nuts;
They puff out smoke from Natural Bloom cigars
And one day they puff like Blony Bubblegum.
Across the square skies with faces in them
Pigeons skid, crashing into the brick.
From a rooftop a boy fishes at the sky,

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Around him a flock of pigeons fountains,
Blown down and swirling up again, seeking the sky.
From the skyview they must seem
A whirlwind on a desert seeking itself;
Here they break from the rim of buildings
Without rank in the blue military cemetery sky.
A red kite wriggles like a tadpole
Into the sky beyond them, crosses
The sun, lays bare its own crossed skeleton.

To fly from this place—to roll
On some bubbly blacktop in the summer,
To run under the rain of pigeon plumes, to be
Tarred, and feathered with birdshit, Icarus,

In Kugler's glass headdown dangling by yellow legs.

4

First Sun Day of the year. Tonight,
When the sun will have turned from the earth,
She will appear outside Hy's Luncheonette,
The crone who sells the News and the Mirror,
The oldest living thing on Avenue C,
Outdating much of its brick and mortar.
If you ask for the News she gives you the Mirror
And squints long at the nickel in her hand
Despising it, perhaps, for being a nickel,
And stuffs it in her apron pocket
And sucks her lips. Rain or stars, every night
She is there, squatting on the orange crate,
Issuing out only in darkness, like the cucarachas
And strange nightmares in the chambers overhead.
She can't tell one newspaper from another,
She has forgotten how Nain her dead husband looked,
She has forgotten her children's whereabouts
Or how many there were, or what the News
And Mirror tell about that we buy them with nickels.
She is sure only of the look of a nickel
And that there is a Lord in the sky overhead.

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She dwells in a flesh that is of the Lord
And drifts out, therefore, only in darkness
Like the streetlamp outside the Luncheonette
Or the lights in the secret chamber
In the firmament, where Yahweh himself dwells.
Like Magdalene in the Battistero of Saint John
On the carved-up continent, in the land of sun,
She lives shadowed, under a feeble bulb
That lights her face, her crab's hands, her small bulk on the crate.

She is Pulcheria mother of murderers and madmen,
She is also Alyona whose neck was a chicken leg.

Mother was it the insufferable wind?
She sucks her lips a little further into the mousehole.
She stares among the stars, and among the streetlamps.

The mystery is hers.

5

That violent song of the twilight!
Now, in the silence, will the motherbirds
Be dead, and the infantbirds
That were in the dawn merely transparent
Unfinished things, nothing but bellies,
Will they have been shoved out
And in the course of a morning, casually,
On scrawny wings, have taken up the life?

6

In the pushcart market, on Sunday,
A crate of lemons discharges light like a battery.
Icicle-shaped carrots that through black soil
Wove away, are spread like flames in the sun
Onions with their shirts ripped seek sunlight
On green skins. The sun beats
On beets dirty as boulders in cowfields,
On turnips pinched and gibbous
From budging rocks, on embery sweets,
Peanut-shaped Idahos, shore-pebble Long Islands and Maines,

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On horseradishes still growing weeds on the flat ends,
Cabbages lying about like sea-green brains
The skulls have been shucked from,
On tomatoes, undented plum-tomatoes, alligator-skinned
Cucumbers, that float pickled
In the wooden tubs of green skim milk—

Sky-flowers, dirt-flowers, underdirt-flowers,
Those that climbed for the sun in their lives
And those that wormed away—equally uprooted,
Maimed, lopped, shucked, and misaimed.

In the market in Damascus a stray goat
Came to a stall where twelve goatheads
Were lined up for sale. It sniffed them
One by one. Finally thirteen goats started
Smiling in their faintly sardonic way.

A crone buys a pickle from a crone,
It is wrapped in the Mirror,
At home she will open the wrapping, stained,
And stare and stare and stare at it.

And the cucumbers, and the melons,
And the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.

7

Already the Avenue troughs the light of day.
Southwards, towards Houston and Pitt,
Where Avenue C begins, the eastern ranges
Of the wiped-out lives—punks, lushes,
Panhandlers, pushers, rumsoaks, everyone
Who took it easy when he should have been out failing at something—
The pots-and-pan pushes his cart,
Through the intersection of the light, at 3rd,
Where sunset smashes on the aluminum of it,
On the bottoms, curves, handles, metal panes,
Mirrors: of the bead-curtained cave under the falls
In Freedom, Seekonk Woods leafing the light out,

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Halfway to Kingston where a road branched out suddenly,
Between Pamplonne and Les Salins two meeting paths
Over a sea the green of churchsteeple copper.
Of all places on earth inhabited by men
Why is it we find ourselves on this Avenue
Where the dusk gets worse,
And the mirrorman pushing his heaped mirrors
Into the shadows between 3rd and 2nd,
Pushes away a mess of old pots and pans?

The ancient Negro sits as usual
Outside the Happy Days Bar & Grill. He wears
Dark glasses. Every once in a while, abruptly,
He starts to sing, chanting in a hoarse, nearly breaking
Voice—

oooooooooooo
vuh jawwwwwwww$_{w_{w_{w_{w}}}}$din
uh

And becomes silent
Stares into the polaroid Wilderness
Gross-Rosen, Maidanek, Flössenberg, Ravensbruck, Stutthof, Riga,
Bergen-Belsen, Mauthausen, Birkenau, Treblinka, Natzweiler,
Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz—
Villages, pasture-bordered
Hamlets on the far side of the river.

8

The promise was broken too freely
To them and to their fathers, for them to care.
They survive like cedars on a cliff, roots
Hooked in any crevice they can find.
They walk Avenue C in shadows
Neither conciliating its Baalim
Nor whoring after landscapes of the senses,
Tarig bab el Amoud being in the blood
Fumigated by Puerto Rican cooking.

Among women girthed like cedar trees
Other, slenderer ones appear:

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One yellow haired, in August,
Under shooting stars on the lake, who
Believed in promises which broke by themselves—
In a German flower garden in the Bronx
The wedding of a child and a child, one flesh
Divided in the Allegheny spring—
One who found in the desert city of the West
The first happiness, and fled therefore—
And by a southern sea, in the pines, one loved
Until the mist rose blue in the trees
Around the spiderwebs that kept on shining,
Each day of the shortening summer.

And as rubbish burns
And the pushcarts are loaded
With fruit and vegetables and empty crates
And clank away on iron wheels over cobblestones,
And merchants infold their stores
And the carp ride motionlessly sleeplessly
In the dark tank in the fishmarket,
The figures withdraw into chambers overhead—
In the city of the mind, chambers built
Of care and necessity, where, hands lifted to the blinds,
They see in mirrors backed with the blackness of the world,
Awkward, cherished rooms containing the familiar selves.

9

Children set fires in ashbarrels,
Cats prowl the fires, scraps of fishes burn.

A child lay in the flames.
It was not the plan. Abraham
Stood in terror at the duplicity.
Isaac whom he loved lay in the flames.
The Lord turned away washing
His hands without soap and water
Like a common housefly.

The children laugh.
Isaac means he laughs.

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Maybe the last instant,
The dying itself, *is* easier,
Easier anyway than the hike
From Pitt the blind gut
To the East River of Fishes,
Maybe it is as the poet said,
And the soul turns to thee
O vast and well-veiled Death
And the body gratefully nestles close to thee—

I think of Isaac reading Whitman in Chicago,
The week before he died, coming across
Such a passage and muttering, Oi!
What shit! And smiling, but not for you—I mean,

For *thee,* Sane and Sacred Death!

10

It was Gold's junkhouse, the one the clacking
Carts that little men pad after in harnesses
Picking up bed-bugged mattresses, springs
The stubbornness has been loved out of,
Chairs felled by fat, lampshades lights have burned through,
Linoleum the geometry has been scuffed from,
Carriages a single woman's work has brought to wreck,
Would come to in the dusk and unload before,
That the whole neighborhood came out to see
Burning in the night, flames opening out like
Eyelashes from the windows, men firing the tears in,
Searchlights coming on like streams of water, smashing
On the brick, the water blooming up the wall
Like pale trees, reaching into the darkness beyond.

Nobody mourned, nobody stood around in pajamas
And a borrowed coat steaming his nose in coffee.
It was only Gold's junkhouse.
But this evening
The neighborhood comes out again, everything
That may abide the fire was made to go through the fire
And it was made clean: a few twisted springs,

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Charred mattresses (crawling still, naturally),
Perambulator skeletons, bicycles tied in knots—
In a great black pile at the junkhouse door,
Smelling of burnt rubber and hair. Rustwater
Hangs in icicles over the windows and door,
Like frozen piss aimed at trespassers,
Combed by wind, set overnight. Carriages we were babies in,
Springs that used to resist love, that gave in
And were thrown out like whores—the black
Irreducible heap, mausoleum of what we were—
It is cold sudenly, we feel chilled,
Nobody knows for sure what is left of him.

II

The fishmarket closed, the fishes gone into flesh.
The smelts draped on each other, fat with roe,
The marble cod hacked into chunks on the counter,
Butterfishes mouths still open, still trying to eat,
Porgies with receding jaws hinged apart
In a grimace of dejection, as if like cows
They had died under the sledgehammer, perches
In grass-green armor, spotted squeteagues
In the melting ice meek-faced and croaking no more,
Except in the plip plop plip plip in the bucket,
Mud-eating mullets buried in crushed ice,
Tilefishes with scales like chickenfat,
Spanish mackerels, buttercups on the flanks,
Pot-bellied pikes, two-tone flounders
After the long contortion of pushing both eyes
To the brown side that they might look up,
Brown side down, like a laying-on of hands,
As at the oath-taking of an army.

The only things alive are the carp
That drift in the black tank in the rear,
Kept living for the usual reason, that they have not died,
And perhaps because the last meal was garbage and they might
begin stinking
On dying, before the customer was halfway home.

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They nudge each other, to be netted,
The sweet flesh to be lifted thrashing in the air,
To be slugged, and then to keep on living
While they are opened on the counter.

Fishes do not die exactly, it is more
That they go out of themselves, the visible part
Remains the same, there is little pallor,
Only the cataracted eyes which have not shut ever
Must look through the mist which crazed Homer.

These are the vegetables of the deep,
The Sheol-flowers of darkness, swimmers
Of denser darknesses where the sun's rays bend for the last time
And in the sky there burns this shifty jellyfish
That degenerates and flashes and re-forms.

Motes in the eye land is the lid of,
They are plucked out of the green skim milk of the eye.

Fishes are nailed on the wood,
The big Jew stands like Christ, nailing them to the wood,
He scrapes the knife up the grain, the scales fly,
He unnails them, reverses them, nails them again,
Scrapes and the scales fly. He lops off the heads,
Shakes out the guts as if they did not belong in the first place,
And they are flesh for the first time in their lives.

Dear Frau———:

Your husband, ———, died in the Camp Hospital on———. May I express my sincere sympathy on your bereavement. ——— was admitted to the Hospital on ——— with severe symptoms of exhaustion, complaining of difficulties in breathing and pains in the chest. Despite competent medication and devoted medical attention, it proved impossible, unfortunately, to keep the patient alive. The deceased voiced no final requests.

Camp Commandant, ———.

On 5th Street Bunko Certified Embalmer Catholic
Leans in his doorway drawing on a Natural Bloom Cigar.
He looks up the street. Even the Puerto Ricans are Jews
And the Chinese Laundry closes on Saturday.

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12

Next door, outside the pink-fronted Bodega Hispano—

(A crying: you imagine
Some baby in its crib, wailing
As if foreseeing everything.
The crying subsides: you imagine
A mother or father clasping
The damned creature in their arms.
It breaks out again,
This time in a hair-raising shriek—ah,
The alleycat, in a pleasant guise,
In the darkness outside, in the alley,
Wauling, shrieking slowly in its blood.

Another, loftier shrieking
Drowns it out. It begins always
On the high note, over a clang of bells:
Hook & Ladder 11 with an explosion of mufflers
Crab-walking out of 5th Street,
Accelerating up the Avenue, siren
Sliding on the rounded distances
Returning fainter and fainter,
Like a bee
Looping away from where you lie in the grass.

The searchlights catch him at the topfloor window,
Trying to move, nailed in place by the shine.

The bells of Saint Brigid's
On Tompkins Square
Toll for someone who has died—

J'oïs la cloche de Serbonne
Qui tousjours à neuf heures sonne
Le Salut que l'Ange prédit . . .

Expecting the visitation
You lie back on your bed,
The sounds outside

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Must be outside. Here
Are only the dead spirituals
Turning back into prayers—
You rise on an elbow
To make sure they come from outside,
You hear nothing, you lay down
Your head on the pillow
Like a pick-up arm—
swing low
swing low
sweet
lowsweet—)

—Carols of the Caribbean, plinkings of guitars.

13

The garbage disposal truck
Like a huge hunched animal
That sucks in garbage in the place
Where other animals evacuate it
Whines, as the cylinder in the rear
Threshes up the trash and garbage,
Where two men in rubber suits
(It must be raining outside)
Heap it in. The groaning motor
Rises in a whine as it grinds in
The garbage, and between-times
Groans. It whines and groans again.
All about it as it moves down
5th Street is the clatter of trashcans,
The crashes of them as the sanitary engineers
Bounce them on the sidewalk.

If it is raining outside
You can only tell by looking
In puddles, under the lifted streetlamps.

It would be the spring rain.

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14

Behind the Power Station on 14th, the held breath
Of light, as God is a held breath, withheld,
Spreads the East River, into which fishes leak:
The brown sink or dissolve,
The white float out in shoals and armadas,
Even the gulls pass them up, pale
Bloated socks of riverwater and rotted seed,
That swirl on the tide, punched back
To the Hell Gate narrows, and on the ebb
Steam seaward, seeding the sea.

On the Avenue, through air tinted crimson
By neon over the bars, the rain is falling.
You stood once on Houston, among panhandlers and winos
Who weave the eastern ranges, learning to be free,
To not care, to be knocked flat and to get up clear-headed
Spitting the curses out. "Now be nice,"
The proprietor threatens; "Be nice," he cajoles.
"Fuck you," the bum shouts as he is hoisted again,
"And God fuck your mother." (In the empty doorway,
Hunched on the empty crate, the crone gives no sign.)

That night a wildcat cab whined crosstown on 7th.
You knew even the traffic lights were made by God,
The red splashes growing dimmer the farther away
You looked, and away up at 14th, a few green stars;
And without sequence, and nearly all at once,
The red lights blinked into green,
And just before there was one complete Avenue of green,
The little green stars in the distance blinked.

It is night, and raining. You look down
Towards Houston in the rain, the living streets,
Where instants of transcendence
Drift in oceans of loathing and fear, like lanternfishes,
Or phosphorus flashings in the sea, or the feverish light
Skin is said to give off when the swimmer drowns at night.

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From the blind gut Pitt to the East River of Fishes
The Avenue cobbles a swath through the discolored air,
A roadway of refuse from the teeming shores and ghettos
And the Caribbean Paradise, into the new ghetto and new
paradise,
This God-forsaken Avenue bearing the initial of Christ
Through the haste and carelessness of the ages,
The sea standing in heaps, which keeps on collapsing,
Where the drowned suffer a C-change,
And remain the common poor.
Since Providence, for the realization of some unknown purpose,
has seen fit to leave this dangerous people on the face of the earth,
and did not destroy it . . .

Listen! the swish of the blood,
The sirens down the bloodpaths of the night,
Bone tapping on the bone, nerve-nets
Singing under the breath of sleep—

We scattered over the lonely seaways,
Over the lonely deserts did we run,
In dark lanes and alleys we did hide ourselves . . .

The heart beats without windows in its night,
The lungs put out the light of the world as they
Heave and collapse, the brain turns and rattles
In its own black axlegrease—
In the nighttime
Of the blood they are laughing and saying,
Our little lane, what a kingdom it was!
oi weih, oi weih

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HERBERT GOLD

A Tale of Two Husbands

It was like giving up to a boyish dream. The lovely Swedish girl offers herself to the lonely stranger on their second day out from New York, in stormy seas, just before the dim gray dripping vision of Halifax rises into view through his porthole.

"Everything okay?"

"I am so happ-y. Vy? It is not wrong?"

"Of course it's not wrong to be happy."

"Frank. Frank. Um—you like to see land?"

"You don't have to talk, Gretta. Want an apple?"

Then the Saxonia docked, took on two groups of French Canadians, one of ancients and cripples, bound for Lourdes, the other making a pilgrimage to the Café des Deux Magots, and moved off again into the irongray North Atlantic waters. It was nine days to Le Havre, and then a few hours on the train down through Normandy, and then Paris once more. But in the meantime, Gretta saved his life; that is, she raised good cheer between them. She gave him a remedy against seasickness that makes you sleepy without dizziness. She purred and laughed and burrowed her delighted muzzle in the crook of his arm. She purred about everything. She both purred and laughed at the look on the night steward's red Cockney face when he caught Frank coming out of her cabin shortly before dawn. She was busy making something of the life of Frank Curtiss, two years divorced, returning to Paris with longing and dread. With his wife there the other time, he had been happy. Now imperatively he demanded to know if he were still young in Paris.

It was the shipboard dream of the tall blond Swedish girl, generous and paradoxically cool, except that she was slight and dark with huge hot demanding eyes and she carried a Swedish passport but told him that her parents were Hungarian. "Dead in the var," she said, "all dead. Vun brother he live in Stockholm. So I take name of Gretta and live in Stockholm. So vy do you make me so happ-y? It is possible? Vy?"

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It was possible because it happened that they made each other happy (happ-y) while the November sea pitched the ship and the bored, stupefied passengers played cards in the lounges and all but Frank and Gretta wondered why the devil they hadn't found a faster way to get across. Overboard a man can last six minutes in these northern waters, and then you haul him up with ruptured veins, bobbing thick and dead in his life-jacket. But never, never, never to come out of this sea was Frank's will about Gretta and Frank.

During most of that voyage Frank and Gretta were locked in each other's arms with the pure, insatiable passion of the suicidal; immolation they sought in each other. They ate, strolled round the wintry decks, tried and did not succeed to amuse each other by watching their fellow passengers, and went below. They could not stay away, they could not surface. Death, immolation, the perversion of an ideal of love timeless and perfect. Striving hearts, knees, nails, teeth, it was the rage of jealousy without occasion to be jealous. They had no memory of each other and spoke of no future. It was a claim on this voyage: forever and ever. No musical lights of Manhattan, no greedy Paris, no past or future, no present even—only this fury, then this gliding fading fall into oblivion, this impenetrable waking once more. When he listened to her in the dark, murmuring half-worded sighs in her funny accent, deep sighs, groans, fragmented cries of astonishment in this funny accent, he found his mouth dropping open for an answering surprise. A woman could still whisper so to him, groan, lost for him! His mouth dropped open in the gesture of a child when he wants to open his ears to hear better. Once he smiled because she spoke so easily from the heart, frowning only for the effortful translation into English, "Vy are ve so happ-y? Vy? Should ve be so happ-y, please?"

On ship there is no work, a suspension, rocking ease and solace, much food, drink, strangeness, hope—great invitation to excess. They ate sandwiches. They plucked at each other's flesh to make April swellings and cravings. She touched his shoulder with her lips, saying, "I am smiling, please. Vy is it so good? Should I be smiling, please?"

"Never mind, Gretta. Just smile."

"You think so?"

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Finally it turned out that her reason for questioning their happiness was a most practical one—she had a husband who would be meeting her at Le Havre. She saved this information for the last day, when land sparrows had already been seen and a funnel of black gulls followed the ship, screaming in its wake. She arranged very simply into English the ideas which Frank Curtiss must get straight: he was not to make too much of all this. She would stay with her husband, of course. She did not want complication. This moment on shipboard must mean nothing when the ship stopped moving. Over. Nothing, nowhere, never. Done. They must forget each other. Yes, but they must remember (stiff hurt misery set into the lines about her mouth). And half-turning, she looked into his left eye. "You think I am . . . nast-y?" she asked.

He shook his head and averted his face, covering his eye with his hand, and she burst into tears where they stood on the enclosed deck above the heaving coastal seas, and she ran to her cabin. He consoled her one more time; she consoled him. "I am so ashamed!"

"No. No. No."

"But I am nice?" she said. "Vy you not tell me I am nice?"

"Gretta."

"Nice? You like? Please."

"Nice Gretta."

"Here, touch. I am sore here from loving you."

"I like nice Gretta."

But sorrow, lust, playful extravagance, good sleep, none of it endures. As if deeply obedient to her declaration that he had no rights on her in harbor or on land after their passage, his desire for her left him utterly when the ship was anchored during the night before disembarkment. The great motors shuddered, stopped, the vibration and dim work noises echoing through the half-deserted cabin class deck ceased, they had somehow to pass these last hours before filing out at dawn. At the ship's party, within sight of the spread haphazard lights of Normandy, a degree of November gaiety had finally taken possession of the small group of passengers. Frank sat up late, muffled in blankets on his deck chair, until the bleak dance racket had ceased. Motion had given him a sense of going somewhere; now he was becalmed. Some of the French Canadians, who had sprawled seasick for a week, now came to life, and two young men, arms about each other's shoulders, swung

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back and forth, shouting, red-eyed and drunken, "Nous sommes en France, mon vieux! En France, mon vieux! C'est bien la France!"

Frank climbed down to his cabin without caring where Gretta lingered or what she was doing. She was probably packing to meet her husband, or sleeping to meet her husband, or like him, just waiting. He entered his cabin. The core of an apple he had eaten after dinner was still in the ashtray.

No, no, he would not try to find Gretta now. He would let her figure how to be pretty for her husband.

Then becalmed, dim-witted, strange to himself, there followed one of those terrible nights that come to a man perhaps once in a decade. It was not insomnia: it was a state midway between wakefulness and sleep, in some indeterminate suspension, as the ship was suspended between the sea and Le Havre, or between New York and Paris; between his habits back home and his memory of unique joy in Paris (he had spent a Fulbright year there, freshly married, still wearing his Army woolens and plump with good health and hope and sure he had whatever pliers he needed to open whatever crate); he lay on his bed fully dressed between the Paris of his twenties and this unknown new Paris, between expectation and suspicion, between justification and judgment, between the ragged, destroyed, oxidized life he had abandoned like the apple core and . . . what? A nasty little future? A nostalgic drifting into middle age like those wrinkled, boyish American wanderers found setting the style of the chic bars of Paris and Rome?

In New York after his divorce he had first imagined himself in love with a folk singer with artificially high breasts and a childish way of holding her arms when she walked, hands higher than elbows, wrists dangling. Then there had been a woman divorced like himself, with a child the same age as his, who eased him of troubles and was a pal and buddy to him and brought him back to good bed life; but finally she lay down the law about marriage—she thought too fast for him. Then there had been. . . . But there had been too many, all wounded like himself, childish and hurt, fleeing, unregenerate. And then he began to wonder if he had ever known what love is, or only what it was to be in love—or the reverse—or if it made any sense to want to *know* about such things

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—or. . . . And so he had decided to escape knowledge by finding happiness where he had once found it, understanding very well that it has no more to do with the place than it has to do with definitions and assurances. (This Must Be the Place, several generations had said about Paris. Now they were saying about psychoanalysis or Zen Buddhism or the Hi-Fi and the MG: This Must Be the Place.) In this life, he thought, there are more jerks than sudden stops, and I seem to be one of the jerks.

Nevertheless, Paris had been his Place. He promised his son that he would be back in three months. He took a leave from his job, borrowed a thousand dollars from his father, sent the check for his child support three months in advance (the Pay As You Go plan), and got a second class cabin at $170 each way, the price of tourist class, because he had twice made love to a girl whose daddy turned out to be an official of the Cunard Line. This extra prize in the box of crackerjack had seemed a favorable augury. Miss Cunard Executive's Daughter (four years at Bennington, seven years with a Jungian, freckled shoulders, grateful for small favors) promoted him merely from Tourist to Second because he did not like travelling with the stupefied, overfed, luxurious first class passengers. Instead he was stupefied and overfed in modified, secondary luxury.

Now he lay on his bed, smoking, trying not to see the apple core, asking himself those circular, futile, primary questions: Where? Whither? Why?

For whom do I live?

For whom?

For what, O Lord?

The answer to all these appeals seemed to be: *Myself; I live only for myself;* and the appeal to God was a manner of thinking which came upon Frank Curtiss despite himself when he was tired, ill, or depressed. It had nothing to do with belief. He said *O Lord* when he had the gripes from too much fried food or too many metaphysics. It meant nothing. But he meant to himself right now: *I live only for myself and don't get the good out of it.*

For a few days, while that apple, a farewell gift from a friend, had lain rosily near his mirror, he had almost believed that the for whom and for what might be Gretta; but of course it can never be a Gretta, the Gretta of fantastic collisions in corridors, whether

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she turns out to have a husband or not. That the whither and why can be a Gretta is the delusion fostered by the blessed schemes of flesh. Pleasure, he reminded himself, must not be confused with love; and even if pleasure leads to love, love itself cannot be confused with a way in life. Frank knew too many devouring couples, loving each other, very conjugal indeed, destroying. He thought of his former wife, now married again, trying to build Fortress Marriage against all the lack of savor of her life.

How do you spell Chicago?

Chicken in the Car and the Car Can't Go, CHI-CA-GO!

There must be something more than this democratic powerlessness. The desire to unite two bodies must mean something more than two bodies cramped together in bed, discussing for dear life, debating whether to buy a Pontiac or a Volkswagen, planning barbeque pits against the anxieties of lives which do not enjoy work or the prospects of the times. The moat around the tri-level ranch-style fills up with stagnant shushkabob. Something more, O Lord, something more. Can a man book passage alone toward that something more? Does the hermit have the right to go into the wilderness with lightweight luggage, stretch hose, dacron shirts, wash-and-wear conscience, complete information on contraception while in foreign land? A handkerchief, washed and stretched against the mirror, will dry practically creaseless overnight.

In his school days Frank Curtiss had studied and worked solemnly, and in these years of his thirties, as can be seen from his thoughts, he coasted on his wits with the same solemn lack of joy. His privileged laziness had no ease in it. Only when in love could he wallow in laughter, fly the coop. But he did not have to be caught to come back to his rules. Control, detach, cut the risks. He gave up of his own accord and returned abashed.

He lay smoking on the mussed bed, trying to keep from seeing the shriveled apple core in the little light above his sink, trying to recall the motion of the ship and not even detecting the lapping of water now as they lay in harbor and awaited the morning. "C'est la belle France, tout le monde! La dou-ce France! Nous sommes en France!"—a dim drunken voice through the corridor. "Je suis français moi, français de Canada, les vrais!"

How was Gretta passing this last night aboard? Perhaps regretting? No, packing. That afternoon he had touched the lazy sprawl

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of underclothes on the extra bed in her cabin. She had shared the silken luxury of her suitcases. Then she had told him, showed him her ring, that famous plain gold band which she had kept with some souvenir American nickels and dimes in her purse. No, surely not regretting, too busy for that.

He drifted down by force of gravity.

He touched nothing on the way.

He lay like a stone in the forsaken center of night.

Then mercifully the steward knocked to tell him that early breakfast was being served in the dining room. He found Gretta sitting over black coffee, her hands embracing the cup, her eyes smudged by fatigue, her face wan, her teeth as bright as ever when she smiled. "Ve eat breakfast to-gather vun more time?" she asked. "Yes? I say I am sorry, so. Please?" But she had begun without him, of course, eggs and toast and jam, needing food for the two ordeals ahead, passing through customs and meeting her husband.

It happened that she performed these duties at the same time. Alfred Bergston, a Swedish counsular official in Paris, had obtained permission to meet his wife in front of the long low tables where the voyagers waited for the customs agents to fluff hands through their belongings and scribble in chalk on their baggage. One of the young Canadians who had shouted his joy over being at last in France leaned liverish and sick against the wall at the far end of this room. At the moment when Bergston appeared, Frank was standing with Gretta making a last silent farewell, wistful, haggard, intimate in the cold light of first morning in port.

Gretta presented her husband Alfred to Mr. Curtiss. Mr. Curtiss had been at table with her during the trip.

Frank mastered the rules. He replied with absolute calm, feeling proud of himself, and noted that Gretta behaved with absolute calm, and was ashamed for her. She knew her way too well. Another victory she had taken from him! It was too easy for her.

But Alfred Bergston looked quickly at Frank's outstretched hand, touched it, and began speaking rapidly in Swedish to his wife. He looked neither at Gretta nor at Frank as he talked, but rather at her open suitcases, as if they told him all he feared, all he needed to know. With an involuntary shrug Frank excused

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himself and went to stand at the table where he awaited his turn with the douanier. In the distance across the hall he could see, in slow motion, the stiff conjugal gestures of tenderness between Gretta and Alfred Bergston, who was exactly one type of Swede—large, pale, heavy, handsome in a small-eyed and thin-lipped ski instructor's way, except that he was a bureaucrat and not a ski instructor, so that he was going to fat in jaw and buttocks and there was a crease of flesh overhanging his collar and other creases stretched across pants that had fit him better last year than this year. He must have found Gretta's southern darkness marvelously fetching when he first met her. He was wearing a fine black sweater over an open-necked, excellently laundered white shirt, black flannel trousers, English shoes with a purplish shine on them—very much the Scandinavian sportsman, casually elegant, "très fort pour le fairplay anglosaxon," as befits the diplomat of a great neutral.

And then the customs man said, "Ouvrez, s'il vous plaît," and Frank tried to open a stuck lock and succeeded in forgetting Gretta and her husband for the time. Soon they were gone. Bergston had driven up to Le Havre; Curtiss took the train; there was no reason ever to meet either of them again.

But meet they did. They met first at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, in that pretty little candy square in Montmartre, where Frank had gone alone to see a long-running farce about a clerk who rebels against The System, in and out of bed, in familiar French boulevard fashion—a mixture of sad jokes, pretentious cynicism, and cheerful impotence. Bergston nodded to Frank, as if they were casual business acquaintances, while Gretta blushed and turned away. She asked her husband to get her some lemonade, he went to the little stand, she stood four feet from Frank without saying a word. He was intensely relieved when Bergston returned (pink lemonade it was) and they strolled away into the intermission crowd. Why at long last the blush? Shame at being seen, all three, like this? Or guilt because poor Frank was mourning her by going alone to silly, cynical boulevard plays in that Paris of his dreams? Did she believe it was for love of her that he stood alone in the lobby? And was it?

She had better, Frank thought, be a cleverer little actress or

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her husband will figure it all out. It's surely not too complicated even for him.

By an act of pure will, Frank determined never to meet them again. If his will should fail him, then he would dodge behind a pillar or a plant. He would hold up a newspaper in front of his face. He would grow a moustache. In other words, after the play he had two cognacs in a Montmartre cafe on his desire not to see the Bergston family.

A few days later they met in the place des Vosges, in the little park near a statue of one of the last Louis, where Frank was strolling and trying to figure out why he was neither depressed nor elated by Paris, just *there,* with none of the gay or the nostalgic magic he had anticipated. Regarding these ideas looped on the tip of a dead king's lance, he stood in that formal and uncomfortable stance of public thought, elbow supported by palm, chin in other palm. The humid, yellow-gray city was just there. I am just here, he was thinking, and that's all there is to it. An ancient bucko with drooping yellow moustaches approached to ask, "Victor Hugo House. You desire see Victor Hugo House?"

"Non, merci."

"One dollar American you see Victor Hugo House renowned author of worldwide fame guided tour with explication."

"No!"

And the man was gone, but standing in his place, with Frank's *no* still bleating at him, was Alfred Bergston, smiling, bowing, host at a Smorgasbord, nodding his head to encourage Frank to say more, refuse fish eggs or cheese with caraway, to deny if he could and dared. Frank whirled, wondering if this deep isolation in which he lived could produce hallucinations, but no, there was the old man, scurrying like a young one in pursuit of client or prey in the direction of the Maison Victor Hugo at one corner of the square. And partway along his line of vision stood a lovely dark young creature, pensive, unhappy, with swollen eyes, watching—Gretta. Her husband had run ahead to greet Frank.

"Good day, sir!" Frank cried out with utmost formality, wondering if this were because he knew the man had learned his English from books or because he was the melodramatic cad in a joke which had no reality to him. "I want to see. . . ," he heard himself

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mumbling, and knew they lost the rest of it as he strode off, trying to keep from running and feeling the straining, twitching muscles in his legs: "the Victor Hugo House." He paid the few francs admission and rushed through, past the bound volumes, the manuscript pages in a glass case, the portraits, the vests worn by, the pens used by V. Hugo, and the dozing guard slumped in a chair. When he emerged, the old guide was waiting with a contemptuous leer marring his face of peaceful senility. He suggested that, although the American monsieur had dispensed with his services, he deserved at least some recompense for supplying the idea of visiting Victor Hugo House. The ideas have of value even in this world brutal and pragmatic, he stated.

Frank returned to his hotel room, threw himself on his bed, lay sullen as a child. And yet Paris had performed no ill on him. And the fat Swede was the wronged man. And yet he wept wronged, childish tears, his chest shaking. Then he felt clear, light, and easy. He blew his nose and went out for coffee and found a pharmacy which sold him eyedrops to clear up the redness of his lids. "It's the conjunctives," the clerk informed him. "One does not need eight years of medicine, plus hospital interning, and no chance to marry or have children along the way to see that it is the conjunctives. Vous vous amusez bien à Paris? Paris c'est beau n'est-ce pas? Tous les touristes aiment Paris," he concluded with satisfaction. "Use these drops at will."

A dubbed western movie to pass the time that night. When the villain's lips were moving to say, "I gotta lay low," a heavy false voice drawled on the sound track, "Je dois rester tranquille."

By this time Frank had presented his letters and paid his calls. He began to receive invitations from friends of friends, acquaintances of acquaintances, and he drifted idly from lunch appointments to apéritif appointments to dinner engagements, visiting the Louvre between, strolling the wintry streets, retreating into the cafes for coffee against the cold and damp. Somehow he was spending more money than he remembered it was possible to spend on the simple life. Somehow he was waiting to go to the Paris he remembered and was not yet there. Paris was still exactly like Chicago or New York to him: the place where he had to meet himself in the shaving mirror.

But this common educational process about the difference be-

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tween New York and Paris—much outside, the same in the shaving mirror—was not yet over for him; or if it was, the example of Alfred and Gretta Bergston was not. The next time he saw Bergston, in the lobby of the Théâtre Français, the man's eyes widened in a kind of curiosity and despair which could mean only one thing: He knew. He suspected. He *knew*.

And if he knows, Frank Curtiss decided, it is only because there was really nothing but anger and cunning and collusion between Gretta and me. He knows only because Gretta wants him to know; she let him know. Contrary to what we are told, a woman can always hide an adventure. Her husband must be told by someone, and in this case it could be no one but Gretta. And that meant that she wanted to inform him, wanted to hurt him. And that meant that she had merely used Frank as the instrument to attack her husband; a tool; the cutting edge, and nothing but a blade.

Frank's face was massacred by his new habit of an intense active boredom at shaving. He stood before the mirror and raced through the process, nicking himself frequently, stopping the bleeding with pieces of Kleenex which sometimes stuck to his face until he felt the stares in the lobby of his hotel and ripped off the scraps of paper. There were little spots of blood measling his collars. He hated to shave. He hated to stand there, waiting. This winter his pale lean head looked almost blue with fatigue. He should find a sunlamp; he should buy vitamin pills; he should improve his color. He should think healthier thoughts in November, learn to like yoghurt, buy a nifty new pair of shoes.

If Bergston knew, then Gretta wanted him to know. Frank's memory of pleasure was over. There was no possibility of constructing the nostalgia of the shipboard adventure on the Saxonia. He was, as a musician friend put it, drifting in adriftsville. Like the porthole through which they had gazed, he had been merely a part of the view for Gretta.

One bleak afternoon he took a bus to the great Père Lachaise cemetery, where Rastignac had stood looking down at Paris, shaking his fist at the city and crying out, "It's between us two now!" He went there, and strolled among the dead as if to try his luck and meet Alfred Bergston by the willow over the grave of Musset or at the broken bottles which sprinkled the grave of André Laporte, "Inspector of Bridges and Roads." But of course Berg-

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ston never appeared. This was no magical persecution. People met by accident all the time in Paris; Bergston was not following him. A light sleet had begun to fall and his shoes were mudlogged.

Now he was convinced, as he lay again in his bed in a hotel with sweating walls and hot water for an hour in the morning and another at night, that Gretta had merely calculated all the while and the flailing heart which she had pressed against his was a trick of metabolism. She had been a wife all the time. She thought only of her fat blond husband, thought of revenges against him, true; but thought only of him. She had not been the facile Swedish girl, taking her amusements as they came, but he had been easy, American, used, a pushover.

He convinced himself that the meetings with Bergston were accidental, and then they met at the American Express, which lay on Frank's daily route—mail, a drink of water, a look at Americans dragging their fun around. Among his letters was a note on Kingdom of Sweden legation stationery:

> Dear Sir:
>
> I must speak with you about an important matter. Urgent and vital importance. I will meet you here.
>
> Alfred Bergston

I'll go to Spain today! was Frank's first thought, and he was still making resolutions, ready to pack, when he emerged onto the rue Scribe, where the newsvender huddled under tarpaulin, to find the Swede in a trenchcoat, hunched, cold, waiting. From the cavern of this large unhappy body came a voice: "I must talk with you, Frank. Ve must talk it over."

Don't call me Frank! You don't know me! Instead he said, "What about? I don't have any business with you, do I?"

And then, when he heard her words, "Oh please! Vy?" he finally saw Gretta, standing in the drizzle further off, moving in little circles on the broad sidewalk, her dark little face beseeching and her hair coming stringy in the wet out of the woolen parka she was wearing. Apparently she had been forbidden to come closer. She walked in little circles, as if caged, and the occasional passerby hurrying through the rain had to walk around her, carefully, incuriously sensing that she might jump in any direction.

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"You must listen. That much at least you must," Bergston commanded.

"Talk then. I'm in a hurry. I'm getting wet."

Bergston straightened up and struck him with a look of scorn. Rain and tears commingled were running down his face. "I *know,*" he hissed. "She told me everything. How you did things." Frank started to deny, but Bergston put up his plump hand to command silence, and Frank now felt some authority in the man and his gestures. He said: "You push her around, you push her around and kiss her, you make love on her—I know! I am told! It is not the first time. It is not the first time! She is a pig, but I love her—I do not blame you, sir, I am a man also—but I love her and I want to guard over our marriage. Please to stay away from her! She is a pig!"

This pathetic, hopeless, brutal man! Frank saw him weeping among the creatures in his pigpen; one of his swine had been stolen. Thinly she was hiccuping, tapping her heel on the wet pavement. "Am I a child to be talk of like so? Vy?" And Frank remembered the whispered *vy?* which he had found so full of praise as the empty hours went round with the two of them in each other's arms, setting depth charges—*Oh vy do you make me so happy, vy?*

Like liquid flowing through a membrane, his feeling for her had drained toward pity for her husband. The man wept in the Paris rain, his heavy face a contorted snout, the eyes shut and red while he continued to call Gretta a pig. "I do not blame you, you did not know me, my suffering, man he has desires, he must suffer, it is our punishment on earth, she is lovely to look at, so sweet to enjoy, though she is swine. . . ." Tears rolled down his fat cheeks. The rain and the tears were dripping onto his collar. "Please to leave her alone for me, I beg you, sir. It is not cost to you. She is swine."

At last Frank could bear no more, he felt answering tears starting within himself too, and he burst out with passionate conviction, "I don't know what your wife has been telling you"—he almost said *sir*—"but there's been nothing! Not a thing! *Not a thing!*" It was a lie which he spoke with more blessed conviction than he had ever spoken the truth, and with this conviction came

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certain knowledge: It really was the truth. As they struggled and cleaved across their beds on the Saxonia, there had been nothing at all.

"Frank! Vy!" Gretta cried, this time disobeying and running up to the two gesticulating men. "Vy you say this things? How you dare?"

A grimace of satisfaction crossed Bergston's face. Frank was started on a way and would continue. "Oh leave me alone, both of you. Just leave me alone. I didn't do anything to her or you or anyone—" *Vy? vy? vy?* "Everybody leave me alone!"

"Oh don't say! It helps nothing, nothing! Vy?"

But Bergston wore a grin on his wet face. He was watching greedily from Frank to Gretta, from Gretta to Frank. Frank Curtiss went on denying, saying no, saying *no,* and felt as the true answer to Bergston's smile the slick grin forming on his own mouth. He denied angrily, indignantly, smoothly, and found himself smiling; he felt himself sleek and fat, or wily and skinny, it didn't matter; he did not know what he felt like anymore or what he would see in the mirror when he looked, but he knew that he had entered upon a new role in life, he had defined himself for himself and admitted how much love he could allow. As he abruptly cried out, "No, no!" once more, and spun around to leave the couple still standing together on the corner of the rue Scribe at the place de l'Opéra in Paris, he saw that Bergston understood him very well, for out of one inflamed eye the man gave him a huge, happy, lewd wink.

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ANNE SEXTON

The Division of Parts

1

Mother, my Mary Gray,
once resident of Gloucester
and Essex County,
a photostat of your will
arrived in the mail today.
This is the division of money.
I am one third
of your daughters counting my bounty
or I am a queen alone
in the parlor still,
eating the bread and honey.
It is Good Friday.
Black birds pick at my window sill.

Your coat in my closet,
your bright stones on my hand,
the gaudy fur animals
I do not know how to use,
settle on me like a debt.
A week ago, while the hard March gales
beat on your house,
we sorted your things: obstacles
of letters, family silver,
eyeglasses and shoes.
Like some unseasoned Christmas, its scales
rigged and reset,
I bundled out with gifts I did not choose.

Now the hours of The Cross
rewind. In Boston, the devout
work their cold knees

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toward that sweet martyrdom
that Christ planned. My timely loss
is too customary to note; and yet
I planned to suffer
and I cannot. It does not please
my yankee bones to watch
where the dying is done
in its ugly hours. Black birds peck
at my window glass
and Easter will take its ragged Son.

The clutter of worship
that you taught me, Mary Gray,
is old. I imitate
a memory of belief
that I do not own. I trip
on your death and Jesus, *my stranger*
floats up over
my Christian home, wearing his straight
thorn tree. I have cast my lot
and am one third thief
of you. Time, that rearranger
of estates, equips
me with your garments, but not with grief.

2

This winter when
cancer began its ugliness
I grieved with you each day
for three months
and found you in your private nook
of the medicinal palace
for New England Women
and never once
forgot how long it took.

I read to you
from *The New Yorker,* ate suppers

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you wouldn't eat, fussed
with your flowers,
joked with your nurses, as if I
were the balm among lepers,
as if I could undo
a life in hours
if I never said goodbye.

But you turned old,
all your fifty-eight years sliding
like masks from your skull;
and at the end
I packed your nightgowns in suitcases,
paid the nurses, came riding
home as if I'd been told
I could pretend
that people live in places.

3

Since then I have pretended ease:
loved a lucky lust of a need, but not enough
to shed my daughterhood
or sweeten him as a man.
I drink the five o'clock martinis
and poke at this dry page like a rough
goat. Fool! I fumble my lost childhood
for a mother and lounge in sad stuff
with love to catch and catch as catch can.

And Christ still waits. I have tried
to exorcise the memory of each event
and remain still, a mixed child,
heavy with cloths of you.
Sweet witch, you are my worried guide.
Such dangerous angels walk through Lent.
Their walls creak *Anne convert. Convert!*
My desk moves. Its cave murmurs BOO
and I am taken and beguiled.

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Or wrong. For all the way I've come
I'll have to go again. Instead, I must convert
to love as reasonable
as Latin, as solid as earthenware:
an equilibrium
I never knew. And Lent will keep its hurt
for someone else. Christ knows enough
staunch guys have hitched on him in trouble,
thinking his sticks were badges to wear.

4

Spring rusts on its skinny branch
and last summer's lawn
is soggy and brown.
Yesterday is just a number.
All of its winter's avalanche
out of sight. What was, is gone.
Mother, last night I slept
in your Bonwit Teller nightgown.
Divided, you climbed into my head.
There in my jabbering dream
I heard my own angry cries
and I cursed you. *Dame,*
keep out of my slumber.
My good Dame, you are dead.
And Mother, three stones
slipped from your glittering eyes.

Now it is Friday's noon
and I would still curse
you with my rhyming words
and bring you back, old love,
old circus knitting, god-in-her-moon,
all fairest in my lang syne verse,
the gauzy bride among the children,
the fancy amid the absurd
and awkward, that horn for hounds
that skipper homeward, that museum

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keeper of stiff starfish, that blaze
within the pilgrim woman,
a clown mender, a dove's
cheek among the stones,
my Lady of my first words,
this is the division of ways.

And now, while Christ stays
fastened to his Crucifix
so that love may praise
his sacrifice
and not the grotesque metaphor,
you come, a brave ghost, to fix
in my mind without praise
or paradise
to make me your inheritor.

Music Swims Back to Me

Wait Mister. Which way is home?
They turned the light out
and the dark is moving in the corner.
There are no sign posts in this room,
four ladies, over eighty,
in diapers every one of them.
La la la, O music swims back to me
and I can feel the tune they played
the night they left me
in this private institution on a hill.

Imagine it. A radio playing
and everyone here was crazy.
I liked it and danced in a circle.
Music pours over the sense
and in a funny way
music seems more than I.
I mean it remembers better;

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remembers the first night here.
It was the strangled cold of November;
even the stars were strapped in the sky
and that moon too bright
forking through the bars to stick me
with a singing in the head.
I have forgotten all the rest.

They lock me in this chair at eight a.m.
and there are no signs to tell the way,
just the radio beating to itself
and the song that remembers
more than I. O, la la la,
this music swims back to me.
The night I came I danced a circle
and was not afraid.
Mister?

The Expatriates

My dear, it was a moment
to clutch at for a moment
so that you may believe in it
and believing is the act of love, I think,
even in the telling, wherever it went.

In the false New England forest
where the misplanted Norwegian trees
refused to root, their thick synthetic
roots barging out of the dirt to work the air,
we held hands and walked on our knees.
Actually, there was no one there.

For forty years this experimental
woodland grew, shaft by shaft in perfect rows
where its stub branches held and its spokes fell.

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It was a place of parallel trees, their lives
filed out in exile where we walked too alien to know
our sameness and how our sameness survives.

Outside of us the village cars followed
the white line we had carefully walked
two nights before toward our single beds.
We lay halfway up an ugly hill and if we fell
it was here in the woods where the woods were caught
in their dying and you held me well.

And now I must dream the forest whole
and your sweet hands, not once as frozen
as those stopped trees, nor ruled, nor pale,
nor leaving mine. Today, in my house, I see
our house, its pillars a dim basement of men
holding up their foreign ground for you and me.

My dear, it was a time,
butchered from time,
that we must tell of quickly
before we lose the sound of our own
mouths calling mine, mine, mine.

A Story for Rose on the Midnight Flight to Boston

Until tonight they were separate specialties,
different stories, the best of their own worst.
Riding my warm cabin home, I remember Betsy's
laughter; she laughed as you did, Rose, at the first
story. Some day I promised her, I'll be someone
going somewhere and we plotted it in the hum-drum
school for proper girls. The next April the plane
bucked me like a horse, my elevators turned
and fear blew down my throat, that last profane

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gauge of a stomach coming up. And then returned
to land, as unlovely as any sea-sick sailor,
sincerely eighteen: my first story, my funny failure.
Maybe Rose, there is always another story,
better unsaid, grim or flat or predatory.

Half a mile down the lights of the in between cities
turn up their eyes at me. And I remember Betsy's
story; the April night of the civilian air crash
and her sudden name misspelled in the evening paper;
the interior of shock and the paper gone in the trash
ten years now. She used the return ticket I gave her.
This was the rude kill of her: two planes cracking
in mid-air over Washington, like blind birds.
And the picking up afterwards, the morticians tracking
bodies in the Potomac and piecing them like boards
to make a leg or a face. There is only her miniature
photograph left, too long ago now for fear to remember.
Special tonight because I made her into a story
that I grew to know and savor.

A reason to worry,
Rose, when you fix on an old death like that,
and outliving the impact, to find you've pretended.
We bank over Boston. I am safe. I put on my hat.
I am almost someone going home. The story has ended.

S. S. GARDONS

The Mouse

On my sister's death

I remember one evening—we were small—
Playing outdoors, we found a mouse,
A dusty little gray one, lying
By the side steps. Afraid he might be dead,
We carried him all around the house
On a piece of tinfoil, crying.

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Ridiculous children; we could bawl
Our eyes out about nothing. Still,
How much violence had we seen?
They teach you—quick—you have to be well-bred
In all events: We can't all win;
Don't whine to get your will.

We live with some things, after all,
Bitterer than dying, cold as hate:
The old insatiable loves,
The vague desire that keeps watch overhead,
Polite, wakeful as a cat,
To tease us with our lives;

That pats at you, wants to see you crawl
Some, then picks you back alive;
That needs you just a little hurt.
The mind goes blank, then the eyes. Weak with dread,
In shock, the breath comes short;
We go about our lives.

And then the little animal
Plays out: the dulled heart year by year
Turns from its own needs, forgets its grief.
Asthmatic, timid, twenty-five, unwed—
The day we left you by your grave,
I wouldn't spare one tear.

Fourth of July

The drifting smoke is gone, today,
From the mill chimneys; the laborers from the great
Iron foundries are on strike. They celebrate
Their Independence her own way.

She stopped a year ago today.
Firecrackers mark the occasion down the street;
I thumb through magazines and keep my seat.
What can anybody say?

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In her room, nights, we lie awake
By racks of unworn party dresses, shoes,
Her bedside asthma pipe, the glasses whose
Correction no one else will take.

Stuffed dogs look at us from the shelf
When we sit down together at the table.
You put a face on things the best you're able
And keep your comments to yourself.

It is a hideous mistake.
My young wife, unforgivably alive,
Takes a deep breath and blows out twenty-five
Candles on her birthday cake.

It is agreed she'll get her wish.
The candles smell; smoke settles through the room
Like a cheap stage set for Juliet's tomb.
I leave my meal cold on the dish.

We take the children to the park
To watch the fireworks and the marching band.
For hours a drill team pivots at command.
For hours we sit in the dark

Hearing some politician fume;
Someone leads out a blond schoolgirl to crown
Queen of this war-contract factory town;
Skyrockets and the last guns boom.

I keep my seat and wonder where,
Into what ingrown nation has she gone
Among a people silent and withdrawn;
I wonder in the stifling air

Of what deprived and smoke-filled town
They brush together and do not feel lust,
Hope, rage, love; within what senseless dust
Is she at home to settle down;
Where do they know her, and the dead
Meet in a vacancy of shared disgrace,

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Keep an old holiday of blame and place
Their tinsel wreath on her dark head?

We tramp home through the sulfurous smoke
That is my father's world. Now we must
Enter my mother's house of lint and dust
She could not breathe; I wheeze and choke.

It is an evil, stupid joke:
My wife is pregnant; my sister's in her grave.
We live in the home of the free and of the brave.
No one would hear me, even if I spoke.

The Survivors

We wondered what might change
Once you were not here;
Tried to guess how they would rearrange
Their life, now you were dead. Oh, it was strange
Coming back this year—

To find the lawn unkept
And the rock gardens dense
With bindweed; the tangling rosebushes crept
And squandered over everything except
The trash thrown by the fence;

The rose trellises blown
Down and still sprawled there;
Broken odd ends of porch furniture thrown
Around the yard; everything overgrown
Or down in disrepair.

On the tree they still protect
From the ungoverned gang
Of neighbor boys,—eaten with worms, bird-pecked,
But otherwise uncared-for and unpicked,
The bitter cherries hang,

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Brown and soft and botched.
The ground is thick with flies.
Around in front, two white stone lions are crouched
By the front steps; someone has patched
Cement across their eyes.

The Venetian blinds are drawn;
Inside, it is dark and still.
Always upon some errand, one by one,
They go from room to room, vaguely, in the wan
Half-light, deprived of will.

Mostly they hunt for some-
thing they've misplaced; otherwise
They turn the pages of magazines and hum
Tunelessly. At any time they come
To pass, they drop their eyes.

Only at night they meet.
By voiceless summoning
They come to the livingroom; each repeats
Some words he has memorized; each takes his seat
In the hushed, expectant ring

By the television set.
No one can draw his eyes
From that unnatural, cold light. They wait.
The screen goes dim and they hunch closer yet,
As the image dies.

In the cellar where the sewers
Rise, unseen, the pale white
Ants grow in decaying stacks of old newspapers.
Outside, street lamps appear; old friends of yours
Call children in for the night.

And you have been dead one year.
Nothing is different here.

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NORMAN N. HOLLAND

Hobbling with Horatio, or the Uses of Literature

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF HORATIO ALGER must be measured, like those of his heroes, not in excellence but in numbers. When he died in 1899, he had written with incredible speed—once he finished a novel in two weeks—over one hundred books. Though, as the *Dictionary of American Biography* somewhat belatedly says, "With the new generation of sophisticated boys such as he never knew, his popularity is dwindling," estimates of Alger's total sales range between 50 and 200 million. He is probably the most popular author America has ever had, and one of the most popular the world has ever known. And one can only wonder why. Lamely written, shabby mixtures of the most rank distrust of human nature and the most fatuous idealism, what could thirty years of American children have seen in such gelded *gestes* as *From Canal Boy to President, or the Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield, Walter Sherwood's Probation, or Cool Head and Warm Heart, Frank and Fearless, Risen from the Ranks, Hobart the Hired Boy,* and the rest. What made Alger so popular?

Alger's forte was hardly style. His lame sentences seem sired by *Roget's Thesaurus* out of a tourists' phrase-book. For example, "His eyes flashed, and his youthful form dilated with righteous indignation." " 'I believe you will,' said the officer, with a revulsion of sentiment in Tom's favor." Each novel seems one long freshman composition:

> Stretched out stiff and stark were two figures, cold in death. They were men of middle age, apparently. From each the scalp had been removed, thus betraying that the murderers were Indians.

Alger's real strength lies in good old-fashioned moral instruction, and his most helpful counsel for the budding Rockefeller seems to be, People are no damn good. In Alger's books, Our Hero must run a gauntlet of sneakthieves, pickpockets, armed robbers,

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and confidence men. He begins to be wise when he acquires a properly Calvinistic view of man:

> The young are by nature trustful. They are disposed to put confidence in those whom they meet, even for the first time. Unhappily, in a world where there is so much evil as there is in ours, such confidence is not justified. There are too many who make it a business to prey on their fellows, and select in preference the young and inexperienced.

This sludge of moral admonition through which the Alger plot limps seems hardly the sort of thing that would make boys rush out to read Alger's novels. Why then were they so popular?

The answer lies in the fact that Alger's own mind was so happily matched to the minds of his young readers. He himself remained a child all his life, an emotional cripple whose growth was twisted by the steady application of moral pressures in childhood.

He was born, his biographer Herbert R. Mayes reports, on Friday the thirteenth of January, 1832, the son of the stentorian Horatio Alger, Sr., Unitarian minister of Chelsea, Massachusetts, and a mild and browbeaten Mrs. Alger. Young Horatio wrote his first story at thirteen, but he—or his father—decided his career was to be the ministry, so he went to Harvard. When a senior, he fell in love with a girl called Patience Stires, but his father told his son that it would not do at all for a minister to marry so young, so Alger, Jr. gave her up—and never forgot her. Just as he graduated from divinity school, Horatio inherited some money from a landlord he had befriended and slipped away to Europe.

A year later, his diary carrying agonized self-appraisals after an affair with a French cafe singer, he returned. The Civil War broke out, and Horatio took to drilling an army of boys on Cambridge Common, Alger's Army of Up-and-Comings, laughing neighbors called them. Alger himself, though he sincerely wanted to enter the army, seems to have been accident-prone. A series of mishaps invariably occurred just as he was about to join the troops. At one point he got as far South as New York, where he was a horrified witness of the draft riots and saw negroes hanged from Manhattan lampposts. These illnesses and accidents continued until, in 1864, he graduated from divinity school and was ordained pastor of the Unitarian Church in Brewster on Cape Cod. Though a good

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minister, he achieved his real success as an author of boys' stories; he resigned in 1866, and moved to New York.

The city at this time had been invaded by an army of drummer boys discharged from the G.A.R., the "street Arabs" that crop up in all of Alger's descriptions of New York. They shined shoes, delivered telegrams, sold papers, carried bags, and guided strangers about the city, taking to petty crime and tuberculosis about equally. The old Newsboys' Lodging House on Fulton Street was expanded to meet this new need and it was there that Alger found his home. He became a fixture, helping out as a teacher and minister, but mostly picking up material for his stories. The boys treated him with a mixture of admiration (for the stories) and scorn (because he was so easily fooled).

In an attempt to become more "literary" he bought a wig and cape and roamed the streets at night disguised as a lime-kiln man. He rumpled his hair, wore smocks, and kept a bust of Shakespeare over his desk. When a literary celebrity like Melville or Bret Harte visited the city, he would hang around the lobby of the Astor House for hours hoping to meet him. Dumpy, bald, and dull, Alger tried to crash New York's journalistic Bohemia, but when he found that this entailed smoking and drinking, he beat an embarrassed retreat to the world of philanthropists and moralists.

In 1878 he met a Mrs. Una Garth and fell in love. Persuaded for a time that he was a sentitive and talented soul, Mrs. Garth used to spend clandestine weekends with him at a farmhouse he had bought for the purpose, until her angry husband took her away to Paris. Alger followed, pouring his heart out to her. He was going to write the Great American Novel. It was to be called "Tomorrow." It was going to teach the common people world history and its culmination—the great destiny of America. It was going to show the world the real genius of the man who wrote boys' stories. "I spent the afternoon with Horatio and saw the opening paragraphs of his 'Tomorrow,' " wrote Mrs. Garth. "May the Lord spare the man from a knowledge of his own incapacity." Alarmed at Alger's indiscretions, she finally told him she did not wish to see him again. He had a nervous breakdown, and after a siege in a Paris hospital finally dragged himself back to the Newsboys' Lodging House in a state of near-insanity. The great "Tomorrow" was shelved, he lived on at the Lodging House, and he

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grew more and more famous as a writer of books for boys. In 1899 he died.

Hardly a Horatio Alger story—or is it? We use that phrase to describe the career of a young man who works hard, lives cleanly, and makes a lot of money, but in so doing, we repress, as it were, the real content of the phrase. A true Alger hero works hard and lives cleanly for 150 pages, and then inherits $50,000. Like most popular literature from *True Romances* to Norman Vincent Peale, the Horatio Alger story is a simple wish-fulfilling fantasy. In this respect, his works do not differ from other boys' books, the Frank Merriwell or Tom Swift stories, for example. Alger's novels, however, sold many times the number of copies these others did, and his popularity suggests that Alger must somehow have tapped an especially rich psychological lode.

Certainly one wish Alger gratifies is the boy's desire to become a man. Alger's young readers identify with Our Hero and vicariously through him win "grit," "pluck," and other symbols of manliness and potency.

> "What sort of a fellow are you?" [the hero is asked in *Strive and Succeed, or The Fortunes of Walter Conrad*] "Have you got grit? Do you generally succeed in what you undertake?"
>
> "I think I do," said Walter, smiling. "I wouldn't give it up, unless I was obliged to."
>
> "I asked the question," said the young man, "because grit weighs heavily in this world. I have noticed that successful men are generally plucky, which is about the same thing."

Money is another symbol for potency, as is the watch which some older man almost inevitably buys Our Hero.

Alger, however, does more than simply gratify a boy's wish to become a man. He provides a foil, the Other Boy. Half of an average Alger novel deals with Our Hero's opposite, for example, Mark Manning in *Making his Way, or Frank Courtney's Struggle Upward:*

> Mark Manning was slender and dark, with a soft voice and rather effeminate ways. He didn't care for the rough sports in which most boys delight; never played baseball or took part in athletic exercises, but liked to walk about, sprucely dressed, and had even been seen on the campus on a Saturday afternoon with his hands encased in kid gloves.

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> For this, however, he was so ridiculed and laughed at that he had to draw them off and replace them in his pocket.
>
> It is needless to say that he was not a favorite among his schoolfellows.
>
> At a large school, manliness commands respect and favor, and an effeminate boy, unless caused by ill-health, is ridiculed and despised.

In Algerese, the Other Boy always looks "as though he has just stepped out of a bandbox." He takes trips to Europe and indulges expensive vices and sicknesses. He has, in short, all the things Our Hero seeks, but he gets them without effort. The Other Boy represents the infantile wish to get the symbols of adulthood without sacrificing the privileges of childhood. When Our Hero is rewarded at the end, when he inherits his fortune (thus, in a way, achieving adulthood without effort), it is the Other Boy who is punished, who atones for the guilt of success. Typically, in the simple pattern of the Alger novel, he is reduced to the boyish state Our Hero was in at the beginning, as Halbert Davis is in *Brave and Bold, or The Fortunes of Robert Rushton:*

> Halbert's pride was brought low. The wealth and position upon which he had based his aristocratic pretensions vanished, and in bitter mortification he found himself reduced to poverty. He could no longer flaunt his cane and promenade the streets in kid gloves, but was glad to accept a position in the factory store, where he was compelled to dress according to his work. In fact, he had exchanged positions with Robert, who was now . . . possessed of a considerable inheritance.

The Alger mother also plays her part in the wish-fulfilling constellation. She is usually a weak, fretful woman, who dotes on Our Hero, even to the exclusion of the father. Thus, when in *Making his Way* Frank Courtney's mother dies, she ignores her husband, Frank's stepfather, to give Frank "one last glance of love." The Alger hero is also likely to be the Alger mother's chief economic prop. In *Brave and Bold,*

> Great was the dismay of Mrs. Rushton when she heard from Robert that he was discharged from the factory. She was a timid woman, and rather apt to take desponding views of the future.
>
> "Oh, Robert, what is going to become of us?" she exclaimed, nervously. "We have only ten dollars in the house, and you know how little I can earn by braiding straw."

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Here again, money (potency) is critical. The hero usually leaves his mother to win success, but guides her destiny from afar by sending money home. Finally he returns unexpectedly to her adoring arms:

> There was a knock at the outer door.
>
> She rose to open it, but, before she could reach it, it flew open, and her boy, taller and handsomer than ever, was in her arms.
>
> "Oh, Herbert!"
>
> It was all she could say, but the tone was full of joy.
>
> "How I have missed you!"
>
> "We will be together now, mother."
>
> "I hope so, Herbert. Perhaps you can find something to do in Wayneboro, and even if it doesn't pay as well —"
>
> "Mother," interrupted Herbert, laughing, "is that the way to speak to a rich boy like me?"

By far the most satisfying figure, however, is the Alger father, or, more properly, fathers, for there are typically three: the real father, the substitute father, and the wicked father. In most of Alger's books, the real father is dead. In many others the father is a father *manqué,* a man who seems strong and full of "grit," but somehow misses. In *The Young Adventurer,* Tom Nelson's father was lucky enough to marry "the prettiest girl in the village" but after twenty years of married life, she is still "drudging in an humble home, where there was indeed enough to eat, but little money even for necessary purposes." Tom's father was never able to best his wealthy rival, but young Tom does:

> "You have shown so much pluck and coolness that you are sure to get along."
>
> "I hope so, I am sure, for my father's sake."

In *Do and Dare, or A Brave Boy's Fight for Fortune,* "Herbert's father, returning from the war with the loss of an arm, was fortunate enough to receive the appointment of postmaster, and thus earn a small, but, with strict economy, adequate income." Walter Conrad's father in *Strive and Succeed* had his money stolen by the Great Metropolitan Mining Company, but, needless to say, Walter was not fooled. In *Brave and Bold,* Captain Rushton had foolishly left the family savings in the hands of the unscrupulous Mr. Davis, and wandered off to Calcutta with the receipt. Young Bob has to correct his father's blunder, and when Bob finds his father in Calcutta,

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his system, from the long privation of food, had received such a shock, that his mind sympathizing with it, he fell into a kind of stupor, mental and physical, and though strength and vigor came slowly back Captain Rushton was in mind a child.

It is Our Hero who puts the Alger father back on his feet. When Bob inherits the miser's money,

Congratulations poured in upon our hero, who received them with modest satisfaction.

"It is a good thing to have a rich son," said Captain Rushton, humorously. "Robert, I hope you won't look down upon me on account of my comparative poverty."

Not only could Alger's readers emotionally supplant their fathers—they didn't even have to feel guilty about it. Our Hero usually acquired a substitute father, another older man, by saving from peril either the older man himself or some woman attached to his family; the action, I suppose, must in many cases have stood for its opposite:

Among the passengers was a stout, good-looking man, a New York merchant. . . .

"It was providential, your seeing the rock," he said to the engineer. "We owe our lives to you."

"You do me more than justice," replied the engineer. "It was not I who saved the train, but that boy."

All eyes were turned upon Robert.

These substitute fathers are bountiful men who lavish praise and money on the heroes, take pleasure in relying on them, and encourage their efforts to become the man in the family. "Plucky young Bob Rushton" and Frank Courtney "with courage and self-reliance rarely found in one so young" are both befriended by wealthy New York merchants. In each case they are given important and responsible posts:

"Do you mean to tell me," said the agent, incredulously, "that Mr. Percival would send out a boy—a mere baby—to look after his affairs, and sit in judgment upon me?"

"Perhaps Mr. Percival had too much confidence in me," said Frank, "but it is so."

In each case these spirited young lads protect their patrons from other employees who are taking advantage of them, thus, in a sense, compensating for the advantage they themselves are taking

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of the real fathers. Herbert Carr in *Do and Dare* becomes companion to the invalid Mr. Melville and saves his life. Tom Nelson in *The Young Adventurer* is adopted by the other members of the wagon train, whom, in turn, he saves from Indians. Most of the substitute fathers buy the hero a watch, a recurring symbol in Alger for adulthood and potency. Like the real fathers, these substitute fathers are likely to be sick, old, or otherwise weakened.

The wicked fathers, on the other hand, are apt to be strong, powerful men, even if they are swindlers, misers, and bullies. Moreover, like Mr. Manning in *Making his Way* and Squire Hudson in *The Young Adventurer,* the evil fathers may be rivals for the love of Our Hero's mother. All these evil fathers either get unfairly or keep unfairly Alger's chief symbol of manliness, money, but in the end, they lose it. Alger's readers could thus project in this disguised and ostensibly just form the castration of their own stern nineteenth-century fathers.

It is in this Oedipal sense, too, that Alger's own pathetic life is itself "a Horatio Alger story," one long attempt to replace his father. His first story, written at thirteen, told of a boy who raced the wind and, when he won, boasted of it. "The wind grew angry . . . and did not come back to play." "The moral of the narrative," pontificated the elder Alger, is, "Thou shalt not set thyself against the word of the Lord." The cocksure Chelsea minister tried to mold his eldest son in his own image, naming him his junior, buying him a minature minister's suit, forcing him toward the ministry by withholding money from him. Horatio Alger, Jr., emulated, but did not dare surpass. For a long time he stuttered, and all his life he was uneasy about speaking in public—surely a handicap for a minister. In later life, almost as if to ward off punishment, he gave away much of his money in compulsive acts of charity.

Writing books enabled Alger to surpass his father, yet avoid competing directly with him. Both in the pages themselves and in the fame they brought, he outdid his father, whom, in later life, he either squabbled with or ignored. Yet he could only write boys' books; at anything else he failed. He could write successfully only if his books compensated for his own rebellion against his father, that is, only if his books seemed to him to serve the high moral purpose of teaching the young to submit to their elders.

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Actually, of course, the books showed the prospective merchant-prince replacing his father to become the sole support of an adoring mother—a delightful fantasy-version of the real nineteenth-century family situation. The Alger novel mirrors its social context in another way. As the nineteenth century progressed, opportunities for "poor boys" to make their way narrowed, yet the Calvinist belief that poverty was a sin lingered on. True virtue, potency, even divine grace, were shown by success in the things of this world: virtue brought its own reward, and other rewards too. At the same time, the Benevolent Employer without whom Our Hero could not succeed suggests the readers' and Alger's growing suspicion that virtue and industry unaided were no longer enough. The Benevolent Employer becomes a necessary supplement to Our Hero's merits, but also eases his conscience. That is, Our Hero, the budding merchant-prince, transfers his filial allegiance to another, distant, more benevolent Father who recognizes true merit and who economically rewards the good and punishes the bad. Money, "pluck," "grit," pocket-watches, and other symbols of potency are outward manifestations of this inward grace, this at-one-ness with a greater Father. At the same time, if a man fails, he must be guilty, he must have sinned against that all-knowing Father, as Alger himself had.

Having paid literary lip-service to that Father, Alger though himself entitled to escape from the father's prohibitions in real life—at least in so far as he could. That is, as a writer, Alger pretended to a Bohemianism he was too repressed to live. For him as for many men for whom the father-image was dominant, relations with women (like relations with the mother) were surrounded with taboos. Both his affairs with women (women, by the way, he could never have married), he saw as literary companionships. "Genius," he smugly confided to his diary during his affair with the French café singer, "Genius has its prerogatives." Being an actual father, however, was not one of them. Though in Alger's Up-and-Comings and the Newsboys' Home he played father to hundreds of boys, and in his books to millions, it remained only a part he played. The real Alger was the guilty, impotent failure who, as he was dying, compared himself to The Little Lame Prince.

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WILLIAM STAFFORD

A Look Returned

At the border of October
where Montana meets Alberta
that white grass that worshipped wind
climbed from summer to the sky,
which began to change.

I saw that day the day relate
winter's province to the state,
and clouds correct the fence's stance
where a hill twisted the line
of the seamless land.

All countries have their majesties
and meet October in various ways,
harking toward wonder every winter,
trying again for their best picture
at their best times;

But that state so north it curled behind
the map in hands of snow and wind,
clutching the end of no place—
I hold that state before my face,
and learn my life.

Traveling Through the Dark

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is always best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

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My fingers touching her side told me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
all around I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—,
then pushed her over the edge into the Wilson River.

Remember

The little towns day found
flowing down streets held still,
and the quiet way we lay there then,
waking?

That sheep town, say, in Nevada
where bells woke us in the dark
and we followed a ditch to a willow—
one, green?

That was almost, by quiet, the time:
the world stilled for dawn;
that instant belonged to the world.
We were there.

Coming back was toward strong light;
the town lay. Nothing was new;
still, the horizon gained something
more than color.

Out there beyond grasp was the air,
and beyond the air was a touch
any morning could bring us—
any morning.

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JAMES DICKEY

The Call

Through the trees, with the moon underfoot,
More soft than I can, I call.
I hear the king of the owls sing
Where he moves with my son in the gloom.
My tongue floats off in the darkness.
I feel the deep dead turn
My blind child round toward my calling,
Through the trees, with the moon underfoot,

In a sound I cannot remember.
It whispers like straw in my ear,
And shakes like a stone under water.
My bones stand on tiptoe inside it.
Which part of the sound did I utter?
Is it song, or is half of it whistling?
What spirit has swallowed my tongue?
Or is it a sound I remember?

And yet it is coming back,
Having gone, adrift on its spirit,
Down, over and under the river,
And stood in a ring in a meadow
Round a child with a bird gravely dancing.
I hear the king of the owls sing.
I did not awaken that sound,
And yet it is coming back,

In touching every tree upon the hill.
The breath falls out of my voice,
And yet the singing keeps on.
The owls are dancing, fastened by their toes
Upon the pines. Come, son, and find me here
In love with the sound of my voice.
Come calling the same soft song,
And touching every tree upon the hill.

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VERNON YOUNG

A Condemned Man Escapes: Five Films on the Subject

We have, because human, an inalienable prerogative of responsibility which we cannot devolve, no, not as once was thought, even upon the stars. We can share it only with each other.

—Sir Charles Sherrington, *Man on his Nature*

We must love one another or die.

—W. H. Auden

In March, 1943, twelve British-trained saboteurs reached the Arctic coast of Norway, having sailed from Shetland in a fishing boat, with orders to destroy the German base at Bardufoss. Their mission was a total failure. Eleven were captured and then or subsequently killed. The lone survivor, Norwegian Jan Baalsrud, escaped across the mountains into Sweden, a distance of eighty miles which took two months of inconceivable hardship to negotiate and entailed the courageous devotion of many nameless people. Baalsrud began his fantastic journey with half a toe shot off, and wearing only one boot. He swam two ice-laden channels, wandered snowblind for three days, started an avalanche which dropped him three hundred feet and left him senseless; rescued, he languished in a hut, alone, for two weeks with his feet becoming gangrenous, then was hauled to the top of the Revdal plateau strapped to a sledge (where hanging from a cliff right-side-up was worse than upside down because the blood would break through his damaged toe). Next he was incarcerated under a protective ledge beneath a snowfield for twenty-seven days, during five of which he was buried completely. After another move he rested in the 'open air' for three more weeks; there, with a bottle of whiskey for anesthetic, he systematically cut off nine of his toes with a clasp-knife. He reached the Swedish border with a band of somewhat reluctant reindeer-herding Lapps and the last spurt was accomplished because the reindeer stampeded, sweeping his sledge to safety over thin ice which the Lapps had feared to attempt. Eleven years later an English novelist, David Howarth, accompanied Baalsrud over the original route at the same time of year to reconstruct the incredible stages of his itinerary, and published the resulting narrative as *We Die Alone*. Nord Sjo Film of Oslo has made a film of this miraculous essay in endurance, called *Nine Lives*: it is Norway's first notable motion picture.

Since the physical crises of life breed more anonymous heroes than are usually accredited, Baalsrud's experience, terrifying beyond imagination, is probably not unique in the annals. But the film, dis-

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tinguished by visual fluency and by rare good judgment in the editing of effects, gives to this man's intrepid achievement an honestly monumental quality unmatched by any similar film epic since Britain's *Scott of the Antarctic* (1949). The Norwegian adventure has perhaps the added force of featuring one man at bay rather than a dozen; further, while the Scott expedition fought only nature and its own mistiming, Baalsrud was in constant danger of discovery by German patrols, with the haunting consequence of wholesale reprisal for all the men and women who were aiding his flight. There is no dearth of movies which deal with extroverted struggles for survival. *Nine Lives* is no deeper involved with subtleties of consciousness than any of them. Yet it is singularly impressive, partly by reason of the fluency I have noted, partly because the setting is, of course, awe-inspiring, and above all, I daresay, because the principal actor, Jack Fjelstad, besides being a creature of physical grace, suggests always a greater range of feeling and of temperamental subtlety than can at any moment be explicitly accounted for. These are attributes of talent no hero in the flesh could be expected to display: they enhance our ready sympathy with the heroic image.

Of Arne Skouen's scenario and direction, a single aspect may be questioned: his unshaded emphasis on the superhuman confidence of both the protagonist and of the men who helped him. There is no hint that anyone concerned with this arduous operation ever despaired, an amelioration humanly as well as dramatically implausible. In actuality, the Revdal rescuers abandoned Baalsrud at one point, with the helpless conviction that since he would shortly die there was nothing more they could humanly do. Baalsrud, himself, would have committed suicide but was then too weak to pull the trigger of his gun. To skimp the darkest moments of failing will in a story which is otherwise sufficient testimony of valor is somehow to falsify the humanity of those engaged. Elsewhere, however, Skouen ably synchronizes his skills with his subject matter: his montage of the ascent to the plateau and his management of the delirium sequence have the rhythm of a master, and his minor re-editing of Haworth's established chronology assists the supple continuity which the art of film narrative requires. Most effective is his quick termination of the film (omitting the Swedish episode of Baalsrud's journey) shortly after the reindeer stampede, a glorious crescendo which at that climactic moment captures visually something of the large musical timelessness of saga. Possibly, our clearest satisfaction with the film derives from our relieved consent to the wonder that sometimes a single man, in the face of pain and isolation, self-mutilation and mathematically overpowering terrors of body and mind, can, if befriended at the right hour, actually win—and that flights of reindeer will bear him to his rest.

Robert Bresson's film, *Un Condamné à Mort S'est Echappé* (released in the U.S. as *A Man Escaped*), is also a reconstruction from the world of

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the War II resistance. Skouen's setting was an eighty-mile area of snow-tyrannized wilderness; the limbo of Bresson's French prisoner of war is less majestic, if less actively painful: a German cell in which he can walk three paces. Each of the very few films Bresson has made focuses a prison situation of a kind (his own explanation is that he likes to find "a uniform" for each film): *Les Anges du Péché* took place in a convent; the characters of *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* were costumed in a stylised fashion which hermetically sealed them off from contemporary reference; in *Journal of a Country Priest,* from the Bernanos novel, the prison is that of conscience. Bresson, austerely neo-Catholic, composes a film of essential material only, making no concessions to 'entertainment values'. When he has edited his essential material, the film is complete. According to René Briot's recent study of Bresson, he prefers not to use professional actors; their talent "prevents" them from giving what Bresson demands—a "moral resemblance" (a counter-paradox to Henry James's in "The Real Thing"). The hero of *A Man Escaped* is played—perhaps one should say lived—by a civilian, François Leterrier, and not since *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) has a camera been so unremittingly trained on a single face, the face of Leterrier, curiously ill-bred and spiritual at the same time: his face, and his hands, whose fingers, in frequent close-up, intimate apprehension, indecision or stoic resolve as electrically as the prisoner's strange eyes.

Long, deft and spatulate, these fingers, obedient to the man's frantically stubborn ingenuity (we never learn what previous occupation trained his resourcefulness), secure his 'impossible' escape from a concrete-and-steel confinement, picking at the wall, handling an improvised file, unraveling a shirt and recomposing it as a rope, and sundry other minute operations as unbelievable as Baalsrud's physical conquest of starvation, exhaustion and gangrene. When, in answer to his muffled plea for a companion to try escape with him, one man shrugs off doom with the observation that God will decide their fate, and Leterrier insists, "But God needs help," one cannot avoid the reflection that all the moral courage notwithstanding, ten nimble fingers were the agencies of his freedom. Leterrier's final test, however, is one of faith in his own perception of human personality, for he has to decide whether the young shaggy stranger unexpectedly introduced into his cell is really a fellow-prisoner or a German spy. To include the boy in his painstakingly prepared break for liberty—this is his willing instinct—is to risk betrayal of all his patient effort. He takes the risk, and the film ends abruptly when the pair is safely over the wall . . . the essential material has been utilised.

The East German movie, *Betragen Bis Zum Jungsten Tag,* deftly translated in Great Britain as *Duped Till Doomsday,* is a devilish advocate of the point that for most of us fear (in the vicarious world of theatre, at any rate) is a readier emotion than mercy. The closed

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situation set up in the scenario, and confirmed by Kurt Jung-Alsen's cold direction of the film, manœuvers us into identifying ourselves as intensely with Lance-Corporal Lick as with the Norwegian fugitive or the French prisoner. Yet Lick is the murderer of two innocent people. To what extent the screen adaptation reflects the novel (Franz Fuhmann's *Kamaraden*) I have no idea. As it is, the spare disposition of forces within a predicament highly contrived scarcely leaves one an alternative sympathy. Three infantrymen, crack shots of a German regiment momentarily stalled before the Russian front, are excused from the day's duty to saunter in the neighboring fields. Two of them aim and fire at a blue heron which they see descend into a thicket. There follows a distinctly human cry of pain. They have shot and killed the daughter of their commandant, Angelika.

The two who fired, Corporals Lick and Wagner, realize at once they can expect no clemency if their accidental crime is not concealed. Private Paulun, who didn't fire, protests he is not involved and believes the death should be reported; the ensuing battle of nerves is the mainspring of the film: Lick, by sheer force of will, supporting the failing strength of Wagner and suppressing the piteous conscience of Paulun. I presume the characters of the three men were purposely schematized to illustrate the analagous state of Germany under the Nazi dispensation. Paulun is sensitive but weak and his desire to confess is motivated obviously as much by fright as by idealism. Wagner is not only frightened; he is not very bright as well. Which leaves Lick master of the field, animated by one consuming instinct—self-preservation. In other respects he is not portrayed as inhuman: he is tough but personable. We are forced to commend his enterprise and the authority he assumes, even as we speculate on the uses to which these assets might have been put in conditions with a civilized inducement. Hourly expecting the discovery of Angelika Van der Saale's corpse, he divulges the whole affair to his uncle, a Wehrmacht general who arrives to inspect the post just as the hue and cry is raised. This cynical exponent of German infallibility diverts the investigation by a rousing speech to the company, blaming the Russians for the girl's brutal murder and calling for spirited retaliation. When three captured Russian women are shot as hostages, Paulun, his devastated control giving way completely, rushes to Captain Van de Saale's quarters to reveal the truth. But Lick overtakes him and the private's hysterical confession is countered with an outburst of inspired presumption from the iron-willed corporal. Paulun, he charges, is mentally unbalanced by the recent events and is not responsible for his wild declarations. The distressed father and captain wavers between disbeliefs; Lick pushes his advantage. Hasn't the truth of the matter been satisfactorily revealed by a high-ranking general of the Reich? Will the captain dispute authority in favor of a sick private's hallucinations? At this hour when national unity is more than ever imperative is he willing to accuse loyal Germans of murdering his daughter? . . . Fear, bewildered

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pain and a *führer*-echo from the mouth of a determined infantryman shatter the poor captain's equilibrium. Crying out impotently and covering his face with his hands, he begs Lick to remove the demented Paulun. Lick resolves to take no more chances. With the hesitating Wagner brought to heel, the dazed private is bundled into a motorcycle sidecar and taken to the edge of the forest. Again overcoming the vacillation of Corporal Wagner, Lick summarily shoots Paulun. The two corporals drive away—liberated.

My synopsis should make it evident that from the naturalistic standpoint the motivational structure is flimsy. The denouement is inevitable only on multiple conditions: that Wagner and Paulun are weaker than Lick; that the General happens to be Lick's uncle, happens to be visiting at the strategic moment and is of a type willing to subvert the death of an officer's daughter for the sake of exonerating a relative and for the vainglory of fomenting a wanton massacre; that the Captain surrenders authority, reason and paternal indignation when intimidated by a bulldog subordinate. Yet from another angle of vision the contrivances are artful. Specious in realistic terms, they insidiously support the architecture of betrayal which is the ultimate subject. In a system (political, military, social) dedicated to nothing beyond the maintenance of its structure, any personal issue has fatally constricted limits. Why was Angelika (surely the name is meaningful?) in the fields at the particular moment? Ostensibly she was returning, via the railroad, to town. Actually she was on her way to an assignation with an officer. (In a war economy love is a clandestine luxury.) The three soldiers, given a day's liberty, can find no more satisfying expression of it than to do what they've been trained to do expertly—to shoot. How could they resist so emblematically pristine a target as a blue heron? As for their ethical implication, Lick spells out for each of them the gravity of the consequences if they confess, and not impertinently asks why one accidental killing is important weighed in the universal scale of killings which they are pledged to increase. But Paulun—is he culpable? . . . He was there, wasn't he? He, too, was a prize marksman; he didn't happen to pull the trigger this time. And why wasn't his timorous virtue as persuasive as Lick's bully-boy incentive? On the periphery of the incident, the General and the Captain react according to their conditioning, within the terms established by the moment of military tension and by the shibboleths of nationalism under which they have consented to function, now reiterated for them by the efficient end-product, Corporal Lick.

In presentation, this deadly shrewd fable is provided with no embellishments to ease our reception. Even the impassive Bresson relieved the severity of his concentrate with the music of Bach. Jung-Alsen offers no comparable relief: he uses no music—except an occasional marching song—none at all to underline (or mitigate) the astringency of his story line, a more unusual sacrifice than you may suppose. (Try to remember when you last watched a sound film with no musical score

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whatever.) Nor does he permit his photographer any but clearly defined, unadorned compositions—no chiarascuro, no untoward sight-lines, no atmospheric lighting. The result, if totally effective once you recognize what he's up to, is not easy to take. The closeup quality of the film is powerful but one does wonder if the statement had to be *quite* this bereft of inflection. Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (while it doesn't sustain its lethal integrity to the end) deals with as grim a subject but is richly endowed with tonalities of lighting and cyclical camera movement. Naturally, in *Duped Till Doomsday,* the art of persuasion becomes largely the actors' responsibility; they live up to it commendably, with the required fever-pitch tension. Thanks to their performances, the unyielding treatment does compel. (It may be noted that Jung-Alsen has been associated with the late Bertolt Brecht's Berliner Ensemble.) We are so strung up—or nailed down—by our recognition of a juggernaut system to which there is no appeal, that it is with almost as much relief as pity we experience at last the off-hand decisive execution of an "innocent".

Even more desolate in its conclusions, with no palliation to be complacently recovered from any 'larger meaning', a Polish masterpiece, *The Real End of The Great War,* directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, owes its existence, like Jung-Alsen's film, to the ironies—for it, too, is sanctioned by the U. S. S. R. Kawalerowicz is one of a nucleus of Polish film-makers which, mainly within the last four years, has produced a half-dozen films equal to any which have emerged from Europe since the rise of Italian neo-realism over a decade ago. *The Real End* is the most deeply disturbing of those I have seen (and each of them disturbs, either by its crucial violence or its bone-deep sadness). Were it not for Kawalerowicz' dazzling virtuosity, I would be moved to acknowledge the film as virtually insupportable, since it conveys an ordeal so painful as to refute that vestige of belief which the most professedly disenchanted among us nourish in their hearts—the belief that there is a finally discernible compensation for the infliction of extreme suffering.

Kawalerowicz opens his film with the vehement uncontrolled rattling of a bedroom door. A woman sits up in bed, patiently admonishes the unseen disturber as if 'it' were a refractory child or a monster, to go to sleep, and remains sitting up in absently sad vigil as the camera glides to a dressing-table photograph of an unusually handsome, smiling man; a waltz accompanies the ensuing dissolve in which *we* assume the witness point of the woman, Rose, dancing with the man of the photograph —Julius, her husband. This waltzing sequence, with the camera (and us) inseparable from the happily dancing man, is prolonged intentionally, so that we make the connection between the debonair Julius and the creature imprisoned behind the door; further, so that eventually we receive the full, nauseating impact of the particular prison-camp experience which has reduced him to near imbecility and which, only

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through brief flashbacks in a crescendo of horror, we glimpse during the film's progress. That he was a *dancing* man is the excruciatingly cruel feature of his numbed sequel. (He can only mouth words to so repulsive an effect that his distraught wife has told him not even to try!) After a hopeless term in which Rose, divided between loyalty and physical revulsion and by the fact that she is in love with another man (her employer) refuses the effort it would cost her to tolerate Julius and perhaps to restore his faculties, the husband has no decent hope remaining—like a maimed insect who has been permitted for no reason to crawl three painful feet in a tantalizing struggle for locomotion.

A perfectly appalling parenthesis of doom—and interpreted with such sensitivity to all the factors that we are never justifiably permitted the easy way out, of condemning the wife or lover. No contrived advantage is taken in the other direction, either, to evoke romantic sympathy. Rose, herself, is moderately attractive, alternately selfish and patient, often petulant. Her lover is a man much older than herself, with a tentative personality. Their mutually inhibited disgust with the husband-victim and with the whole hopeless unbidden situation (which from time to time feebly erupts in exchanges of spite) is neither exploited nor condemned by any directorial bias: these are human beings of no distinguished capacity "caught in the fact"; if their predicament is considerably less agonizing than that of the poor wretch who must watch their discomfort and realize in stifled isolation the inconsequence of his own mutilated survival, we are nonetheless allowed a reasonable measure of sympathy for them as well. Julius takes the only possible way out, which frees nobody but himself, at least not so far as the film divulges. In a kind of trenchant side-glance at Carol Reed's ending to *The Third Man,* Kawalerowicz implies an aftermath unresolved. The lover, waiting as is his custom in restless, if resigned, devotion, is ignored with evident finality by Rose and her housekeeper as they leave the scene of the funeral.

As I have indicated, Kawalerowicz has not only a gift for compassion ordered by insight but also a stupendous film technique. The milieu is right, the tonalities are right (I have an impression, probably erroneous, that all the exterior Warsaw scenes take place in the rain)—and the moments when Julius's consciousness spins blurred visions from a fit into gradually decelerating images of the prison-camp are shockingly brilliant. This director involves the beleagured onlooker with resourceful cinema, in the absence of which one would be tempted, long before the end, to escape from the unappeasing spectacle of a cultivated but broken human tortured by a futile extension of his lease on life.

Dr. Walter, head physician of the Trablos hospital, seems equally a blameless sacrifice if you regard one level only of André Cayatte's allegory, *An Eye for an Eye*. In one of those Near-East outposts which

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appear to consist solely of a tacky European cafe-society and a substratum of native squalor, Walter (Curt Jurgens), relaxing at home after a long unstinted day, declines to give personal attention to an ailing woman whose husband, a Syrian named Bortak, phones him for help. He recommends them instead to the hospital, only twenty minutes away by car, where his competent assistant, Matik, is on night duty. The assistant operates, on the basis of a faulty diagnosis, and the woman dies. Walter's subsequent examination reassures him, and the remorseful Matik, that her case was hopeless, anyway; her death is regrettable but neither of them is to be blamed. The husband, however, whom Walter has yet to encounter, after a preliminary sequence of mystification on Bortak's part, is of a different mind. To this injured, obdurate man, Walter's guilt is irrevocable: he shirked his professional obligation and the patient died. In a succession which needn't be summarized here but is altogether plausible as it unfolds, Bortak (Folco Lulli) devises a scheme of Orientally elaborate cunning whereby he first puts Walter under obligation, lures him to a primitive village and strands him there, helpless, then offers to lead him to an ostensible return route across the desert which, day by day, seems to be taking them farther away than ever from the promised last junction of their journey—Damascus.

Penelope Huston, writing in Britain's *Sight and Sound* magazine, has summarized this movie as "a brutal and unlikely story of revenge [which] has force without substance and falls under the weight of its own pretensions." I believe I'm not generalizing unfairly if I remark that the judgment is of greater significance for understanding the premises of British film criticism than it is for appreciating the film in question. To the welfare-state mind, which Britain is evolving daily from its traditional basis of empiricism, there is always something not quite nice in the view that man may be impelled by forces less visible than social agencies. Cayatte's film, far from being unlikely —brutal it may well be to those who wince easily at fateful conclusions —has in it a profoundly dismaying logic when the metaphysic of its melodrama is perceived. (The very choice of Damascus is a fairly explicit clue for the Miss Hustons.) Its real subject Cayatte has previously adumbrated, and the title of his last film was the text, *We Are All Murderers*. At the rational altitude of human response, Walter's dereliction, suavely depicted as unavoidable, is patently justified by the detailed circumstances to which the audience bears agreeable witness. None the less, asks Cayatte (or Vahe Katcha, author of the idea which Cayatte co-adapted), when a man evades an appeal to his moral instinct, no matter how temporising a case he can make out for himself, is he not likely to initiate a chain of reprisal out of all proportion—as we conventionally see it—to the innocence of his evasion? Cosmic response to human frailty is seldom relevant. The civilised doctor does in truth refuse humanity, and an oaf, Bortak, is the instrument invoked to avenge—terribly—this refusal. Indeed the film's "substance" is more

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ample than its "force", paced as it is with disarming absence of tension (no premonition-style music, no symbolic colors) until well past the mid-point, when you begin to suspect that the nice doctor's detour may never end and that Bortak is fatally more than an aggrieved and knuckle-headed Arab wearing a cheap store suit, a loud tie and sunglasses: he is the shabby angel of an unseen and dispassionate power of requital, (himself executioner and victim, as it transpires).

Bortak displays the first clear evidence of any calculation on his part when the disciplined but now buckling doctor, tortured by thirst and exhaustion, begs to be left alone to die. The Arab's savage rejoinder is, "*That's* what I've been waiting to hear you say, Doctor Walter!" Apparently satisfied, he finally promises to take Walter into Damascus without further deviation; the city is only a short distance behind a range of hills where they camp on their last night. But Walter has by now no faith in such announcements, no conviction that his tormentor is appeased. While Bortak dozes, he scrapes the man's arm open with a razor. As Bortak struggles to his feet, clutching at his bleeding arm in amazement, Walter tells him in effect: "Now, *if* we're as near Damascus as you claim, you'll survive the journey and I'll take care of that arm for you when we arrive. If we're not . . ." Bortak, nursing his arm but still oddly impassive, thereupon deals his last card. He points ruefully in the *opposite* direction, assuring the doctor Damascus lies *that* way. They resume their weary trek. Bortak gets rapidly weaker from loss of blood, falls behind and collapses. "Just go straight on, Doctor," he calls out to his doggedly trudging victim; laughing faintly he repeats, "Just go straight on". Dr. Walter plods straight on. The camera lifts slowly to a panoramic overhead shot (the only occasion which may be said to warrant the use of VistaVision for this film). Beyond the doctor's mercifully-hidden view the Syrian badlands extend—mile upon mile of dead, sun-baked terraces and twisting, empty river-beds: not a creature visible in the limitless expanse of plain and rock and chasm, no village, no habitation of any kind whatever, no Damascus—: no reindeer.

ERRATUM: A regrettable printer's error marred the dedicatory line of Roy Harvey Pearce's essay in our Autumn issue. It should have read: *To the memory of Edward Niles Hooker (1902-1956).* We extend apologies to Mr. Pearce and to our readers.

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NORMAN N. HOLLAND

A Brace of Bergmans

LAST WINTER'S COCKTAIL PARTIES were much enlivened by a new game: What does *The Seventh Seal* mean? This year Ingmar Bergman has thrown two equally puzzling chefs-d'oeuvres among the hors d'oeuvres: *Wild Strawberries* and *The Magician*. And both have all the symbols needed to keep the do-it-yourself allegorist busy until Bergman's next two films appear. Of course, there are always partypoops who say we should not trouble ourselves with the symbolism but just "appreciate" the film—there is pictorial beauty and excitement enow. So indeed there is, but to try to enjoy a Bergman film without understanding its symbolism is like trying to see night baseball without lights.

In the case of *Wild Strawberries*,[1] the outfielders are, to say the least, rather shadowy. A wide variety of film critics have proclaimed *Wild Strawberries* Bergman's "masterpiece." Certainly, when compared to the films of other directors, it is a brilliant, complex, and fervent film. But compared to Bergman's other work? He has dived in where his skills are weakest: ordinary, realistic human relations, and the effect is more or less what you would expect from using a public-address system to play small talk.

Wild Strawberries deals with the education of a professor. Dr. Isak Borg (played by the grand old man of the Swedish film, Victor Sjöström) is about to get an honorary degree on the occasion of his fiftieth year as a physician and professor of medicine. The night before he is to appear at the university, he dreams Caligarishly of death and, somewhat unnerved, decides to drive instead of flying. On the way, he accumulates passengers: his daughter-in-law Marianne (played by the Isis-like Ingrid Thulin); three hitchhikers, two young men and a girl; a squabbling husband and wife. Borg also accumulates dreams, recollections, and episodes. He visits his old, cold mother. Marianne makes him "see" his son Evald's icy, death-like command that she not bear the child she is carrying. He joins in a squabble between the two young hitchhikers as to whether or not God exists.

The education of the professor makes him (we are to believe) a warm, loving, feeling human being of the type demanded in the endings of teen-age movies and "mature" westerns. At the beginning, we are told—and one of the weaknesses of the film is that we are not shown, but told—he is a chilly old man who has withdrawn from others because he thinks people only criticize one another. At the end of the

[1] *Smultronstället* (1958): written and directed by Ingmar Bergman; director of photography, Gunnar Fischer; presented by Svensk Filmindustri, released by Janus Films; featuring Victor Sjöström as Isak Borg, Ingrid Thulin as Marianne, Gunnar Björnstrand as Evald, the professor's son, and Bibi Andersson as Sara.

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film, after his spiritual journey, he has become kindly, drawn again into fumbling efforts at affection. His education comes about through the pneumatic enthusiasm of the brash young hitchhikers who give him tributary bouquets, floral and choral, through a gas-station attendant's recalling his kindnesses of younger days, and through the frank accusations of his daughter-in-law. Besides these "real" stimuli, there are "surreal" ones, dreams and half-dreaming recollections of his childhood, and it is in these that Bergman delivers the richness of image and the eerie *wyrd* of allegory that made *The Seventh Seal* so marvellously discussable.

The professor's first dream is a surrealistic, soot-and-chalk sequence, much in the manner of Murnau. On a deserted street, the old man sees first a clock without hands, then a dead man, a sort of bag-of-blood man, who spills into the gutter. Next, he sees a hearse which tips over like a baby carriage, spilling its passenger who tries to drag the professor into the coffin and turns out to be (naturally) himself. When they drive to the summer home of his childhood, he revisits the thicket of wild strawberries where he dreams of his first love, Sara; he sees her surrender to his ne'er-do-well brother who had the sexual warmth he, even then, lacked. This dream is followed by his meeting with the young hitchhiker, also called Sara, also played by the sprightly Bibi Andersson. In a second dream, Sara reappears to Isak, accuses him again of coldness, and leaves him again for his brother. Her confronting him with a mirror merges into a classical examination-dream out of *Die Traumdeutung* in which the professor is examined on his life: he looks into the microscope of scientific knowledge, but sees only his own eye; he diagnoses a patient as dead, but she lives. Finally, he is forced by the examiner to witness again a scene in which his long-suffering (and long-dead) wife goes through one of her periodic seductions. His final dream-vision, before sleep, is of his father and mother at the shore of the lake at the summer-house; there are, Sara tells him, no more wild strawberries in the thicket.

Now all this seems pretty profound, but there are a number of problems. First, Victor Sjöström, playing Borg, simply looks too furry, too much like Lewis Stone in the old Andy Hardy series, to be the chill old curmudgeon we are told he is. Second, his transformation comes too easily; a man of sixty does not change his basic character because of a few dreams and conversations unless he is Ebenezer Scrooge—and *Wild Strawberries* does somewhat uncomfortably resemble Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. Most important, I do not think the symbols jell, either in tone or meaning. Naturally, a critic hates to make a remark like that—it may simply mean he didn't catch on, particularly when so many other critics have so enthusiastically, if vaguely, endorsed Bergman's ambiguities. To me, however, they remained cryptic, and I have enough confidence in my vision of symbols to come right out and say the obscurity is a beam in Bergman's eye and not a mote in

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mine. The symbols do develop the realistic theme in a number of different directions: the professor's approaching death, his already dead feelings, the fact that he is a doctor who cannot "feel" his patients, the existentialist angle that one cannot avoid the claims of life, Marianne's hope that the child she will bear will somehow break the iciness of the chain that is the *famille Borg*. Yet the complicated, surrealistic, usually Freudian symbols mix with the homecooked main plot about as well as some catachrestic *kirschwasser* would with an ordinary martini. Further, the symbols are redundant. The constant references to heat and cold seem a too-obvious strategy to describe the unfeelingness of the professor. The many, many images of death say the same thing over and over again until you are forced to ask yourself what the differences in their sayings say, and to that I found no answer.

Consider Borg's final vision. An old man, as he always is in his dreams, he is led by the young Sara of his adolescence to find his parents. He stands, snowy-haired, at the edge of an inlet and waves to them on the opposite shore. His mother is painting; his father is fishing, his pole, as one critic has it, "forming a perfect arc into the still water." The image suggests with great power, admittedly, but what? the happy home of childhood? that the old professor will soon join his ancestors? Does the father's pole represent a phallus out of Freud or a Fisher King out of Jessie Weston? The difficulty is that the realistic theme of the film, the old man's rejoining humanity, is far too small to hold the crowd of symbols Bergman packs into it, and the fringy elements on the edge of this imagistic *soirée* drift all over. The dreams act together in a loose way on the central theme of deadness; their details, however, do not.

Nevertheless, three themes do emerge out of and beyond Borg's insensitivity—call them time, woman, and confrontation. With many of his symbols, a clock without hands, the sound of ticking or a heart beating, Bergman seems to be saying that the essense of life is to be in time. The professor's opening dream of death is timeless, while the life-giving action of the picture, his journey, his honorary degree, his acceptance of his age, and particularly his appearance in dreams of his childhood as an old man, these are all very much involved in time. Death, in short, seems to be thought of as no-time, life as multi-time.

Woman plays a key role in time: she is, as the heartbeat is, the living measure of it. All through the picture objects are found in boxes or coffins or caskets, and much of the action takes place in the confined space of the professor's automobile, an image for the confined space of life itself. Woman, in other words, seems in *Wild Strawberries* like woman in Freud's "The Theme of the Three Caskets." She is a sort of triple goddess, first the mother, then the beloved, finally the ultimate mother, mother earth. In the film, the professor's mother has outlived all but one of her ten children; the professor's beloved Sara lives again

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as Sara the hitchhiker (and Sarah was Isaac's mother). When the professor receives his new academic hat, we see him do it before an audience of women. Woman seems real, timeful, while man is the mere creature of timeless abstractions and illusions (academic hats, the hereafter, God, or, for that matter, atheism). As Bergman himself has written, "It was Adam who was made from Eve's rib.... Man is mainly a supplement. It is woman who makes life function." So perhaps the professor's final vision serves to show how man fishes for what woman has already caught. In any case, Bergman is saying the central experience of life is not the intellectual activity which opens the picture or which earned the doctor his new degree; nor is it religious questions which reduce to a silly squabble between sophomores. The central thing in life, *Wild Strawberries* seems to say, is the relation of parenthood, represented physically by Marianne's pregnancy, spiritually by "Father Isak's" befriending the hitchhikers.

Man, the symbolic level says, has three ages: child, mate, and sage. Isak Borg missed the middle, the meat in the sandwich, entirely. Never (until the end) do we see the professor as parent; never do we see him in the middle years between boyhood and old age; never do we see him as a lover, though repeatedly he watches the lovemaking of others. All through the picture, his spectatorship raises questions, What can you see, what can you know? The answer seems to be that you *really* know only what you live; spectatorship is, like abstraction, unreal, dream-like. In the end, the old professor learns to confront his own children and, in his dreams, his parents. He becomes, in the Biblical sense, as a little child. In short, *Wild Strawberries,* I think, says that only by being a child or a parent can man see and hear and know beyond the confined space, the closed car, of his own lifetime.

Far more successful, however, than *Wild Strawberries* is *The Magician,*[2] perhaps because in it Bergman does not attempt a crenellation between symbolic dream-level and realistic plot. Instead, he uses an unreal *donnée* which merges the two levels from the start. *The Magician* deals with a quack mesmerist who in fact has the powers he professes. (Once you accept this premise, the film ceases to be confusing—and becomes paradoxical.) The central idea of the movie is thus *illusion* or, to use the graduate student's rubric, appearance-and-reality. Its Swedish name, *Ansiktet,* means "face," and the face of the remarkable Max von Sydow, playing the mesmerist, is one of the film's most striking features, one of its many illusions. The magician dare not appear ordinary to his illusion-hungry public, so he wears eerie, yet Christ-like, make-up and pretends to be as mute, dumb, and palpable

[2] *Ansiktet* (1959): written and directed by Ingmar Bergman; director of photography, Gunnar Fischer; presented by Svensk Filmindustri, released by Janus Films; featuring Max von Sydow as Vogler, Ingrid Thulin as Manda Aman, Gunnar Björnstrand as Vergerus, the doctor, and Naima Wifstrand as the crone or grandmother.

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as the poem in Professor MacLeish's famous lyric. Yet he has a perfectly ordinary face when we finally see it halfway through the film, and he can speak—when he is being a man instead of an artist.

The picture begins with close-ups of the magician traveling in a small coach with his troupe, an odd-looking assistant called Aman (played by Ingrid Thulin), an old crone, a coachboy, and a barker. They are driving (in the 1840's) through a magnificently spooky forest. Hearing cries, they stop and bring into the coach an actor dying of drink. As he dies, he shows *his* face to the mesmerist as the ultimate truth. This opening episode sets up the "fact" against which the rest of the picture is poised: death is the final reality; man is an actor whose life, "step after step . . . proceeds into the dark"; all that man considers real are merely roles he plays, fakes, illusions, with one exception which the rest of the film develops.

After the dark wood of reality, seen from the confining space of the coach, the troupe proceeds to Stockholm where the show is examined by the authorities, the foreshortened representatives of science, culture, and the law: a doctor, an aristocrat, and the police chief, respectively if not respectfully. From their positivistic stance ("Science can penetrate all mysteries"), they humiliate the mute mesmerist, Vogler (literally, the bird-catcher), and they send the artists down to the servants' quarters. During the night, however, either with or without the troupe, it becomes clear that people want to be deceived, to project their own dreams onto the illusionists. The aristocrat's wife, longing for her dead child, tries to seduce Vogler. A serving-girl falls in love (despite an intoxicating philtre) with the mesmerist's inept coachboy. The cook persuades the barker that he should come and live with her and be a preacher. The skeptical doctor tries to seduce the magician's assistant, Aman, when he finds out she is Vogler's wife (another illusion). The police chief simply gets drunk, and his toupee (excuse me, hair-piece) slides off. Mixed in with the illusions of these particular characters, Bergman has ransacked mythology for the archetypal illusions of the race: the hanged man, the love goddess, ghosts, the bacchanal, the coffin, the spells and prophecies of the old crone, and the figure of Christ as expressed in Vogler's tragic mask. There is at least one illusion that speaks for Bergman himself, the image made by a magic lantern (which he has written was the most important toy of his childhood).

After the hurly-burly of the night, the troupe puts on its show for the censors the next morning. The first tricks are outrageously fake, much to the glee of the skeptics (people like to be deceived, but only if they know they are being deceived; no mysteries, please!). Then Vogler, angered, does real tricks: first with the mind, making the police chief's wife blurt out under hypnosis the less savory aspects of their relationship; then with the body, binding a hefty coachman with invisible (hypnotic) chains. Suddenly, when released, the enraged

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coachman kills (or seems to kill) the hypnotist, and here Vogler plays his deadliest trick—with the soul. The doctor brutally insists on an autopsy which he completes to his satisfaction. Locked alone in the dark attic, he suddenly finds an eye in his inkwell, a hand on his papers; finally he is pursued all through the attic in a marvellously gothic sequence by the body he has just dissected. (It turns out that the vengeful Vogler substituted the actor's body and carried off the rest with hypnotism.) Nevertheless, despite these "real" illusions and the coachman's hanging himself, the skeptics remain sublimely unconvinced. The doctor who had been scared out of his wits dismisses Vogler's death-and-resurrection by saying he had merely created a "little fear of death."

Just as the skeptics are about to punish Vogler and his wife (who now appear without make-up or costume as the shabby, troubled people they are), Bergman tacks on the grandest illusion of all, a splendidly improbable ending. As at the end of *The Threepenny Opera* Victoria's messenger comes riding, riding, now a message comes from the King (surely the same King as in *Tartuffe)* summoning the troupe to a command performance. Bergman, in effect, shows that we, too, his audience, want to be deceived (but not deceived) just as the skeptics did. We, too, want to know we are being deceived. Death and love, the actor's death and Vogler's love for his wife or the servingmaid's for the coachboy, these, Bergman seems to say, are the only realities; all other human activity, artist's or police chief's, is an illusion, a role played by dying actors. Yet we ask the artist (and abuse him for it) to deceive us, to show us other illusions. So long as he makes it clear that they are only illusions, they excite us, they make life seem even realer. As the dead actor says, "I didn't feel really dead until I became a ghost." But should the artist show us the "real unreality" he knows, a real miracle, should he break down the barrier we erected between reality and unreality so we could live, then we simply deny him. We shut the "ghost" up in a coffin. To admit such a "real unreality" would show us that life itself and all we take for real is really fake. This is the magician's secret—and Bergman's, who has called himself a conjuror working with a gimmick that makes us think still pictures move. Only woman (the crone-goddess who gives the mesmerist his powers) can create real life; Bergman, and all artists, are but tricksters.

So far, less than a dozen of Bergman's twenty-one films have received much circulation here (three more are scheduled for late 1959 release). It is probably too soon to attempt a comprehensive view, but critics, I suppose, are entitled to create illusions, too. Bergman, it seems to me, shoots with one foot in existentialism and the other in psychoanalysis. Basic to his sensibility is the idea that death is an ultimate reality and we live life (even love) by consciously accepting it as brief and illusory. As he himself expresses it, "Each film is my

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last." Mixed with this dark view is small cheer from psychoanalysis, the concept of woman as life-bearer and man as abstraction-mongerer, the concept of the artist as a dream-peddler, and a preoccupation with the characters' spying on the lovemaking of others, primal scene fantasies, which, the analysts say, one would expect to find at the heart of the psyche in both film-maker and film-goer. In sum, Bergman's sensibility pivots about one central and eminently cinematic issue: What is real, or, put another way, What is it you see?

Because of this essentially visual theme of illusion or imagination, Bergman's technique takes less from the ideological montages of Eisenstein, Dovshenko, and the Russian school than from the surrealism of Vigo, Cocteau, Hans Richter, and the early Buñuel. He has also drawn heavily on his own Swedish tradition, mixing the sheer pictorial beauty of Mauritz Stiller's long shots with the expressionism of Strindberg (as brought to celluloid by Alf Sjöberg, for whom Bergman wrote his first film script). Though his earlier models are heavily psychological, Bergman is also mythological. He draws from folklore and such primitive art-forms as the puppet-play, the *commedia dell'arte,* medieval woodcuts, mystery plays, and the films of Méliès.

More important, Bergman has added his own existentialist touches, which most obviously take form as his extensive use of close-up and his "confined-space" technique (which he first developed in *Waiting Women* in 1952).

> Our work in films [he has written] begins with the human face. We can certainly become completely absorbed in the esthetics of montage, we can bring together objects and still life into a wonderful rhythm, we can make nature studies of astounding beauty [a glance askance at countryman Sucksdorff?], but the approach to the human face is without doubt the hall-mark and the distinguishing quality of the film.

This view is natural enough for a theatrical director who is denied close-ups on the stage, but Bergman has turned his over-compensation into a distinctive style. In all of his pictures, close-up rather than montage or composed long-shot dominates the technique. He sets many of his most effective scenes in almost coffin-like confinement: a stalled elevator *(Waiting Women),* a confessional *(The Seventh Seal),* a closed car *(Wild Strawberries),* a locked attic *(The Magician).* Bergman's technique reflects Bergman's existentialist image of man, a face in a frame of death; Bergman's films are themselves acts of confrontation.

In essence, however (as opposed to existence), we are dealing with an artist who deceives us with life. Bergman preaches love, but he seems rather chilly and intellectual as he does it. He is at his best when he bridges this dissociated sensibility by using a consciously mythy mixture of realism and unrealism, the allegorical visions of death and life

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in *The Seventh Seal,* the midsummer-night rituals of *Smiles of a Summer Night,* the mesmeric tricks of *The Magician.* When he tries to deal with immediate, realistic human relations as in *Three Strange Loves* or *Wild Strawberries,* the effect is rather like a Ma and Pa Kettle movie scripted by Kafka. Yet we would all, I suppose, prefer a Ma and Pa Kettle movie by Kafka to one by the rusticated hacks of Hollywood, and Bergman's failures would be almost any other man's triumphs. We sometimes forget, in the fervor of our emotionality, that art—even moving pictures—should be intelligent as well as "moving." At his least, as in *Wild Strawberries,* Bergman towers over all but a handful of today's directors for intelligence. At his best, as in *The Seventh Seal* or *The Magician,* Bergman is a second Eisenstein—as, given enough time, even the chatter at cocktail parties will show.

B. H. HAGGIN

Music Chronicle

YEARS AGO STOKOWSKI CONDUCTED for the memorable stage production of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* that had Robert Edmond Jones's gigantic masks and the great Margaret Matzenauer's singing of Jocasta. Last fall he conducted for a New York City Opera Company production that was a less distinguished and successful achievement. Admirably related to the grim, austere, monumental musical utterance of the work was the initial stage picture contrived by Paul Sylbert: the stony figures motionless before the towering stone wall of the palace. But this initial force was lost when the music that comes out with hard clarity and tension in Stravinsky's performance was heard softened up by Stokowski's conducting, and when the stony figures began to move their arms in the manner of opera singers; and a further loss resulted from the insufficient vocal power of Richard Cassilly, the Oedipus, and Regina Sarfaty, the Jocasta, in the performance I heard.

Yet, even in this production *Oedipus* reduced to insignificance its companion on the double bill conducted by Stokowski, Orff's *Carmina Burana.* Stokowski has been exerting himself for this piece in recent years even more than he did earlier for *Oedipus,* and made a mistake now in having it follow the Stravinsky piece; for the extreme simplicities of melody and harmony that had impressed the public and Winthrop Sargeant as a Significant New Note in contemporary music were, after *Oedipus,* heard to be the emperor's new clothes. And they were used as a sound-track for choreography by John Butler which only

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exhibited again his endless ingenuity in the contriving of movements that make the dancers look embarrassingly silly.

The New York City Opera's other box-office sell-out was a production of Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* that was one of the most distinguished achievements in the company's history, and this despite the shortcomings of two of the principals. Phyllis Curtin is the company's outstanding soprano and sang beautifully, but didn't sing Fiordiligi's *"Come scoglio"* with the powerful phrasing that its words and its musical style require, and her *"Per pietà"* with the largeness of expressive style it should have. And in the performance I attended the Dorabella was Regina Sarfaty, whose upper register has a metallic quality. But the solo singing of the male principals—John Alexander as Ferrando, John Reardon as Guglielmo, and James Pease as Don Alfonso—was excellent; all the voices blended beautifully in the ensembles admirably put together by Julius Rudel; and he kept the work going with lightness, grace and finesse. With this performance of the music there was a staging of the action by William Ball that made its points effectively and amusingly without the usual clowning, on the platform and steps of the attractive and useful single set designed by Robert Fletcher.

The American Opera Society, which performed Donizetti's unfamiliar *Anna Bolena* two years ago, began this year with his uncompleted *Il Duca d'Alba*. The conductor was Thomas Schippers, who made a new version for the Spoleto Festival last summer from the original manuscript and the printed scores of other versions; the principal singers were those he had at Spoleto; the orchestra was the Symphony of the Air. And from the first measures of the work one followed the impressive results of two operations—Donizetti's in the music and Schippers's in the performance. Those first measures were the orchestral prelude, which impressed one with the highly developed and expressive orchestral writing that was so remarkable throughout the work, and with the beautiful orchestral sonorities that Schippers secured from the fine orchestra and shaped with the plasticity and continuity, the authority and control, that were evident throughout the performance. Most of the vocal writing also was highly developed in style, moving freely and continuously in accordance with expressive need; and most of it was of high quality—one exception I recall being a banal trio in, I believe, the third act. The principals were mediocre; and the soprano and tenor in particular made one fear that young Italian sopranos were now trying to sing like Callas and young Italian tenors like Del Monaco.

The Little Orchestra Society's first operatic offering of the season was Haydn's *The Apothecary,* which I found uninteresting.

The greatest of Bellini's melodic structures, the *"Casta diva"* from *Norma,* was sung by Eleanor Steber at her Carnegie Hall recital with her usual beauty of vocal tone and distinguished phrasing and style—though also with an interpolation of high notes in the concluding

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phrase of the repetition of the melody. And *"Una voce poco fa"* from Rossini's *Barber of Seville,* as she sang it, was made up largely of such interpolations. There was also a fine performance of Agatha's aria from Weber's *Der Freischütz;* and interspersed with all these were Bach's Cantata No. 51, *Jauchzet Gott,* in the florid portions of which Steber's voluminous voice was constricted and shrill, and songs of Rossini, Debussy and Berg, in which the lovely voice deployed itself with ease and opulence in superbly shaped phrases.

The directors of the New York Philharmonic may evaluate Leonard Bernstein by the crowds he attracts to Carnegie Hall; the players of the orchestra may evaluate him by the large amounts of money he makes it possible for them to earn; but a critic must evaluate him by the way the Philharmonic, under his direction, carries out the task that is the orchestra's reason for existence—the task of enabling the public to hear the orchestral literature effectively performed. And that was what I was interested in, after reading last year in *The Times, Harper's* and lesser publications about the innovations Bernstein had made in the programs, the improvement he had achieved in the orchestra's playing, the growth in "depth and maturity" of his musicianship and conducting.

The first week's program this year, as announced originally, comprised Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture, Triple Concerto and *Eroica* Symphony; as revised, it had Shostakovitch's Fifth in place of the *Eroica;* and so it ended by offering one impressive short piece and a boring long one by Beethoven and a long trashy one by Shostakovitch. And the second week's program listed Barber's *Second Essay,* one of his fluently unoriginal pieces of what Bernard Shaw called "second-hand music"; then Ives's *The Unanswered Question,* a piece with a big idea and little music (strings in the back playing quiet chords which represent the conventional life that goes on and on, while a trumpet on one side repeats a phrase which asks whether this is what life is good for, and increasingly agitated exclamations of flutes on the other side are futile attempts at an answer); then one of Stravinsky's least attractive neo-classical works, his Piano Concerto; and only then something first-class—three movements from Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet.* A good program offers both old and new music; but it must also offer a preponderance of good, significant or at least interesting music; and this makes the Bernstein programs I have just described—only two of many of the same kind—bad.

I skipped Beethoven's Triple Concerto and the Shostakovitch Fifth; but I attended the Sunday afternoon performance of the second week's program. If I had heard only this concert I would report that the orchestra played very well, and with virtuosity in Berlioz's *Queen Mab;* and I would add—while giving Bernstein all the credit due him for this excellence—that the high degree of precision and tonal beauty

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could be attributed in part to the fact that the orchestra was playing pieces it had been playing repeatedly on its European tour. Actually, I also listened to the broadcast the night before, and heard the English horn lose its way with discordant results at one point in *Queen Mab* (page 201 of the Eulenburg score); and a musician I know who heard the Thursday night "preview" reported that in the Stravinsky concerto the basses made a wrong entrance and continued to play incorrectly for some time. And this friend explained these errors by the exhausting succession of one-night stands, all-day or over-night trips (some in busses), rehearsals and recording sessions which the tired orchestra had been plunged into the moment it had returned from Europe. Under the circumstances the playing I heard at the Sunday concert was something of an achievement, for which it must have made a great effort. (The next week I got a report that the orchestra had sounded as though it were making no effort for the guest conductor of that week's concerts.)

At the Sunday concert, then, the performances gave evidence of Bernstein's technical equipment for conducting—i.e., for the business of getting an orchestra to play accurately and beautifully in the realizations of his conceptions of the pieces of music. And what remains to speak of is what conceptions of the music this technical equipment was made to serve, and what equipment they revealed of musical insight, judgment and taste. An orchestra's reason for existence, as I said before, is to provide the public with effective performances of the orchestral literature—effective, I will now add, not in the impact of dazzling execution and tone, but in the impression made by the music as it is given shape in living sound. We have had brilliantly effective conductors of orchestras—Stokowski and Koussevitzky are outstanding examples—who have produced wrong impressions of many pieces of music with the way they distorted them. What, then, of Bernstein? At the Sunday afternoon concert I heard, the touchstone of his operation as a musician, for me, was his performance of the "Love Scene" from Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*. Writing once about Berlioz's use of the sixteen kettledrums and four extra brass bands in the *Requiem,* the great English critic W. J. Turner remarked that "all these things in the hands of anyone but Berlioz would have resulted in incredible vulgarity; but Berlioz could not be vulgar." And one can make a similar comment about the "Love Scene" from *Romeo and Juliet*. Its expressive content is unmistakable: the *premiers transports, premiers aveux, premiers serments* described in the Prologue; and these —which could be an occasion for vulgarity—are instead conveyed in musical terms of the most exquisite delicacy which not only characterize the emotions of the young lovers but reveal the delicacy of feeling of Berlioz himself. This delicacy is embodied not only in the melodic and harmonic substance and orchestral coloring but in the precise outlines Berlioz prescribes for the shape of the substance with his

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tempos and dynamics and his modifications of tempo and sonority. And what Bernstein did was to italicize the delicate strokes of Berlioz —to linger *molto meno vivo* over what Berlioz marks *un poco meno vivo* (top of page 149 of the Eulenburg score), to slow down what Berlioz marks *senza rallentare* (top of page 150), to rush a tranquil melody (page 152) in a section that Berlioz marks *Adagio* with a metronome-marking to make sure (page 151), to linger with heavy emphasis over a wistful melody that Berlioz marks *a tempo* and *pp* for the strings and *ppp* for the winds, with only *un poco rit.* and only slight expansion and emphasis in sonority (top of page 165)—and in this way to vulgarize the exquisite piece. Even in *Queen Mab,* which lends itself less easily to this treatment, Bernstein fussed with the inflection of the woodwind melody of the second section (page 199) and whipped up the returning first section (page 205) beyond Berlioz's *Tempo I un poco più presto* to a pace which rushed the distant horns in the third section (page 208). And in "Romeo Alone" he fussed with the shapes of the violins' opening statements (pages 54-55), slowing down Berlioz's *Andante malinconico e sostenuto* to a dragging *Adagio,* then (page 56) hurried the melody that should continue *sostenuto,* but made an enormous retard in its concluding measure (page 60), in which Berlioz makes none at all, and so on. The performances of the Barber, Ives and Stravinsky pieces, on the other hand, seemed free of this monkeying with tempo and inflection.

What Bernstein did that Sunday afternoon he has been doing the past fifteen years and probably will go on doing in the years to come. He has tended to deal straightforwardly with modern and contemporary works—though I must add that recent recordings offered a frenetically whipped up performance of Stravinsky's *Sacre* and one of the *Firebird Suite* in which there was a lingering and melting over details, a fussing with exaggerated nuances of sonority and tempo, that I doubt Stravinsky would find acceptable. Also, in symphonies of Mozart he has accepted the limits set by their style, and, operating with restraint and taste, has produced fine performances—though here too I must add that in his own playing of the piano parts of Mozart concertos there has again been tasteless lingering and melting over fussily inflected phrases. But most of the standard repertory he has treated in the way he treated the three pieces from Berlioz's *Romeo*—with no restraint on what has impelled him to distort the shapes of the works and their expressive effect. That is what he has done until now; and I can think of no reason for expecting him to do anything different in the years ahead. It will not be from him that the public will get its valid performances of Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Mahler and the rest.

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EDWIN DENBY

The Bolshoi at the Met

THE GREAT MOSCOW BOLSHOI BALLET, here last spring, disappointed some ballet-goers. "We'd all expected so much, and they aren't superhuman after all," a bright young lady exclaimed as we met at the door after a performance of *Swan Lake;* she quickly added the warmest praise for Ulanova in *Romeo and Juliet.*

About Ulanova I quite agreed. At first sight her vividness of motion, unique among the dancers around her, reminded me of Martha Graham's. As for the company, the first half hour shows it is a great one—highly skilled, convinced, attentive, lively. In *Romeo* everybody did a great deal of pantomime. They didn't all prove striking actors—nor would that be possible. But the company doesn't make hasty or shrunk up or "unpurposeful" gestures. The movement of a gesture has that amplitude of strength, that full support from the waist, traditional among Russians, but which the Bolshoi has excellently trained. The large-scale easy power of movement, whether of mime or dance, I found a remarkable pleasure.

But let me describe the Bolshoi *Romeo and Juliet.* The score is Prokofiev's; the story, Shakespeare's. Costumes and sets look like stock nineteenth-century stage properties—Renaissance style. The action shows you, one after another, the familiar "big" scenes of Italian grand opera—the morning market, the street affray with drawn swords, the ballroom festivity, the carnival, the duel with a slow death followed by another with a quick one, the clan oath of vengeance, the family row, the burial by night with torches and tapers. Regulation opera house humor is offered, the regulation populace of Italian opera turn up, wenches, pedlars, down to the ragged urchins played by girls "en travesti." Every bit of it done in earnest, with complete conviction and, of course, total laryngitis. It goes on for nearly four hours. At first you wonder that despite the Italian opera model nobody on stage behaves with an Italian irony or elegance; then you realize that everybody is behaving like the brutal Boyars and dimwitted serfs in a conventional movie about Ivan the Terrible.

The pantomime points of the crowd scenes are made obvious and then made obvious again. Succinctness, surprise, leaps in logic—the fun of pantomime—is avoided. The crowd slowly prepares a mass climax, then it slowly milks it, then comes a lull in interest, a cover scene, carefully protracted. The pace is that of an army indoctrination lecture.

When the crowd dances, the dancing is more stage business. Briefly the love scenes—the Balcony, Bedroom and Tomb duets—hint at a kind of dance that isn't stage business—on the Balcony, a few classic

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steps, in the Bedroom a few lifts, in the Tomb a single lift, a very fine one. But even alone together the lovers keep pantomiming; the ballet doesn't venture into the other world of metaphor a dance can develop. In Shakespeare the love scenes develop an expression wonderfully alien to the Verona scenes, and that radiant difference makes the drama. Pasternak says of the play, "And to the din of butchery and cooking, as to the brassy beat of a noisy band, the quiet tragedy of feeling develops, spoken for the most part in the soundless whispers of conspirators."

The company's opening bill in New York was *Romeo*. Ballet-goers here had seen many a pantomime piece more brilliant and beautiful. But what they had looked forward to seeing was the Bolshoi's fabulous dance power, and *Romeo* kept that under cover all evening.

Ulanova's vividness saved the first night. Bending her neck toward her partner in a lift of the Bedroom Scene, the gesture had the tragic quiet Pasternak speaks of. Or take the opposite kind of moment. Faced with marriage to County Paris, Juliet, her mantle flung round her, desperately rushes along the apron to Friar Lawrence; armed by him with the sleeping potion, she flings the mantle round her again, and rushes desperately along the apron back home. The fling, the rush, the exact repeat are pure "Perils of Pauline." But Ulanova's art at that moment is so brilliant the audience breaks into delighted applause.

You can find out something about Bolshoi style by trying the gymnastics of Ulanova's fling and rush yourself. Standing in the middle of the room, fling an arm across your chest, and at the same time raise the breastbone as high as it will go, bending it over at the top so it pushes the neck back. Don't let go, keep forcing the breastbone further, but in addition push the neck forward as hard as you can, and lift your head until you feel "desperately resolved." (It may make you cough.) And now, keeping the stance you are in unchanged, rush about the room with an incredible lightness and rapidity. If your family is watching, they will pick you off the floor, and urge you to try harder.

The special stance of fling and rush you just tried (it involves a backbend between the shoulder-blades) is not classical. It has been called the pouter-pigeon silhouette by Walter Terry, and that is just how it looks. But when Ulanova does it, you feel it means, "Here is my heart."

But if you notice that, you also notice her feet. In light runs on toe (bourrée steps) they seem to touch the floor sensitively. You see how keen the pointed foot looks in the air, during attitudes, arabesques, and passés, how clearly the leg defines and differentiates the different classic shapes. Below the waist Ulanova is a strict classicist; above the waist she alters the shape of classic motions now slightly, now quite a lot, to specify a nuance of drama (for example, the pouter-pigeon silhouette). Neither element—the lightness below or the weight above—

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is weakened for the sake of the other; the combined motion keeps fluid. And often while one movement is ebbing to its end, another seems already welling up in the midriff.

The Bolshoi women share Ulanova's method, but not her vividness. The pacing—the pulse—of their movement is less varied, more predictable. Ulanova shows the unguarded timing of a spontaneous gesture. And she keeps that "motivation" throughout a role. You watch the rhythm of a specific character, the irremediable individuality. The imaginary creature on stage is much more alive, much more unforeseeing than anyone around her. That holds your eye and your sympathy. Ulanova uses no other charm. She does not take the audience into her confidence, she attends to the literal mimic meaning at every moment. Her manner is that of an heroic post-mistress. And yet in the pas de deux from *Sylphides* where the meaning lies in a particular buoyancy of dancing to music, she was also at her most poignant.

At the age of nearly fifty, Ulanova does not have the luscious ease of a young ballerina. Other women of the company are stronger, more acrobatically striking, or fresh and sweet. None of them can give to a stage heroine a convincing heroism.

Though not as vivid actresses as I had expected, the principal women of the Bolshoi are dancers with authority, handsome feet and charming figures. The impression of heaviness they give is due to effects of Bolshoi style. The pouter-pigeon stance for instance. The first time you see the *Swan Lake* Swans hit it full strength, stepping in slow straddles and uncoiling their arms Hindu-style, they look like women of great weight specially trained to move; they look prepared for immolation. When several women go into the stance with men on stage, you wonder that the men pay little attention. Later you see why. The Bolshoi women go into pouter-pigeon in all kinds of situations, at several angles, with different steps and gestures, and out again. The stance is a regulation formula. For a formula, it is rather unattractive. It shortens the woman's neck, it makes the head look helpless, the figure dumpy. Other formulas are no less hard on the women. You keep seeing open mouths, hunched shoulders, jutted chins, arms turned inside out at the socket and avidly reaching; you keep seeing elbows bent stiff or stretched stiff, hands crooked at the wrist, impatient arms, agitated hands, bobbing heads. When the women go into this formula they look fidgety. Another formula has them look so preoccupied with an inner trouble they can't be gracious to each other or to the men. The general idea seems to be that when a woman feels deeply, she looks a bit countrified.

The men of the Bolshoi haven't the women's light feet nor their heavy emotion. They are pleasant to each other and to the women, and four-square in their bearing. They don't try for a classic distinctness in low shoulders, upright neck, and level head, they don't much turn out at the thigh, or clearly stretch their feet, or define their

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descent from a leap. They are self-effacing, and reliable lifters; but given the chance, several become striking dramatic dancers and mimes.

The difference between the style for men and the style for women throws the sexes into relief. On the other hand, relations between the sexes keep to a Victorian propriety. This isn't so easy in some of the big lifts where the mutual holds and tosses are far from Victorian.

But in two folk-hero parts, Vasiliev, a very young man of nineteen, showed what the Bolshoi style for men is capable of. One or two other men leapt as high as he, but none as they leapt and danced had his power of sculptural contour in motion or his power of upbeat in rhythm. None as actors had his lion-hearted magnanimity toward the heroine, the entire company, and the whole world. In dance or mime Vasiliev's instinct for generosity and delight couldn't be bigger and truer. His style is plain; his poetic gift—no simple one—is as radiant as that of the fabulous Russian dancers of the past.

Three of the youngest women principals, Timofeyeva, Maximova, Kondratieva, are ravishingly pretty and only the least bit stuffy. A fourth, Bogomolova, according to the local experts, can meet both Bolshoi and Western standards of ballerina technique. Samokhvalova could too, very likely. Bolshoi technique stresses big jumps more than quick toes; it stresses mobility of shoulder and upper spine, and acrobatics like those of a vaudeville adagio-team. Western ballerina technique requires a sharply versatile, high-speed exactitude of step and of ear and a high-tension stamina—which are not Bolshoi characteristics.

But as one grows used to Bolshoi style, the gifts of a score or more of principals, men and women, become evident. The "Highlights" programs showed their dance power best, and on those, in good-natured acrobatic audacity, the ballerina Plisetzkaya outdid anybody in the world. I grew to like the individual dancers better and better.

The productions however did not gain by being seen twice. *Swan Lake,* a revised version, developed less momentum than the traditional one in London, and no poignancy. *Giselle* began well, but becoming longer and longer, lost its drive in each act. *Stone Flower,* a Moscow novelty, tried for dance momentum and fun, but like the other Bolshoi choreography, it kept losing the upbeat of the rhythm.

The Bolshoi's dance rhythm—choreographically speaking—is neither big like Fokine's nor clear like Moiseyev's. The dances are apt to go on without gathering momentum, without getting anywhere. They come down heavy on the downbeat and slur the upbeat. At a climax they pound the downbeat. They haven't the lilt of lifting off it, or the fun of matching a counter-rhythm to the musical rhythm. They miss the upbeat buoyancy of a musical momentum, the exhilaration of a rising sweep of impetus. The rhythm is weak on resilience.

The dancers are expected to perform it with rubato, ahead or behind the music. They "shape" each phrase, treating the time-values of the

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rhythm more elastically than the orchestra does. Each phrase has urgency, each phrase lacks repose.

You see the dancers do with devotion what they are asked to. During climaxes of emotion they are not asked for the calm and completely erect carriage of the classic ballerina and of her partner. They are not asked for the climactic suspense, the extreme responsibility of the lightest finish, the lightest musical phrasing. Since Diaghilev's time great Russian dancers have been showing us these extreme traditional resources of their art. At tragic and at happy climaxes they have shown us the power of radiance ballet can achieve. The lovely young Bolshoi ballerinas do not spread that radiance. The young Soviet violinists and pianists who visit us are in command of all the traditional musical resources, not only of amplitude of strength but also of edge and elegance and quiet. No reason the dancers should not have them too.

The Bolshoi has formalized its style and it does what it does on principle. It covers up with care the brilliantly unreasonable resources of expression which are the glory of ballet dancing. It does so to stress instead an acted mime meaning. Four or five in the company can do this convincingly; the rest, though sincere and convinced, haven't a gift for vivid acting. Nor has the choreography a gift for narration. At a three hour stretch the company's mime of deep feeling and psychological motivation isn't absorbing. Where the Bolshoi convinces all evening is in the ample strength of a movement and in the weight of one. And for these dance qualities, too rare in the West, it will always be welcome.

The Bolshoi means to uncover its dance power in the next few years. When it does, it will add to the literal meaning of pantomime the metaphorical meaning of dancing. As of now, Western ballet—and even our own part of it—offers more fun, a fiercer lustre, more grace of irony, and much more imaginative excitement and poetic courage, though it isn't stronger and is ever so much less secure.

OLIVIER TODD

Paris Letter

AS IF SUCH A THING COULD EXIST, France has a Minister of Culture, the ex-writer André Malraux, now turned politico-cultural traveller for the government. So far Malraux's innovations have been slight or ridiculous. A few weeks ago he delivered himself of one of his customary cryptic speeches on the Acropolis, transformed by a French firm into a *spectacle son et lumière*. As on many other occasions, the Minister proved

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to the world in general and the reluctant Greeks in particular that officialised Culture, like wine, doesn't travel well. Responsible, among other things, for the subsidised theatres, Malraux decided that the Comédie Française provided too much Labiche and not enough Racine. Therefore the Odéon, baptized "Théâtre de France," has produced one of Claudel's stale masterpieces, *Tête d'Or*. The régime doesn't often manifest itself positively in the literary and artistic fields. It is modestly satisfied with negative decisions: it seizes books like *La Gangrène* and, occasionally, newspapers. It refuses an export license to Roger Vadim's modern film version of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. Morality is always close on the heels of Order.

Literature and Politics mixed pleasantly in Jean-François Revel's brilliant pamphlet *Le Style du Général*. From a critical and detailed examination of de Gaulle's recent speeches and writings, Revel draws certain conclusions as to the psychological make-up of the President of the French Republic. *Le Style du Général* is a ferocious booklet but very serious indeed beneath its comic virtuosity. Revel has once more shown how to be penetrating without being pompous; this of course was enough to infuriate two Academicians, Maurois and Mauriac. A cramped solemnity is what makes so many of the numerous confessions and biographies of ex-communists like Edgar Morin or Henri Lefebvre so tiresome to read. Lefebvre's *La Somme et le Reste* contains bits of technical philosophy, reminiscences, short literary essays, even poems—and not very good ones. It proves abundantly that there is a great deal of *désarroi* among those intellectuals who still think of themselves as marxists (very literary marxists) but have left the C.P. or have been expelled from it.

I'd rather have my poetry straight, without trimmings of spongy prose. Aragon, who also published a long-winded historical novel, *La Semaine Sainte*, and a critical essay on his conception of Socialist Realism, *J'abats mon jeu*, pulled off the best long poem of the year, with his usual ingenuity and verbal inventiveness. *Elsa* is a monstrous piece. It contains abominable lines like

Quand tu dors dans mes bras je peux longuement caresser ton âme

or masochistic ones like

Voilà trents ans que je suis cette ombre à tes pieds

but also some genuine lyricism and some excellent rhymed sarcasm:

. . . Avez-vous le programme
J'en ai besoin pour me faire une idée
La pièce est belle à ce que dit le Monde
La terre tourne à croire Galilée
Quel est le fou qui prétend qu'elle est ronde
Pour ébaubir trois chats et dix pelés
Ah s'il fallait écouter la critique

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On entendrait claquer les strapontins
Qu'importe un Kemp paléontolithique . . .

Aragon is one of the few pre-war poets still able to write good, meaningful and often powerful poetry, though he can be too clever. Among the younger poets, Yves Bonnefoy and Jean Joubert have, in very different veins, produced volumes which in the mass of published verse are remarkable for their firmness of purpose and especially their attention to form. I liked going from Bonnefoy's metallic *Hier Régnant Désert* and pieces such as:

Aube, fille des larmes, rétablis
La chambre dans sa paix de chose grise
Et le coeur dans son ordre. Tant de nuit
Demandait à ce feu qu'il décline et s'achève,
Il nous faut bien veiller près du visage mort.
A peine a-t-il changé . . . Le navire des lampes
Entrera-t-il au port qu'il avait demandé,
Sur les tables d'ici la flamme faite cendre
Grandira-t-elle ailleurs dans une autre clarté?
Aube, soulève, prends le visage sans ombre,
Colore peu à peu le temps recommencé. . . .

to Joubert's softer but equally tense *Poèmes d'absence*, and particularly to "Absente":

Absente, vous régnez fraîche contre mon corps
Dans un espace nul aux rives de la nuit
Et vous donnez, absente, un peu plus de vous-même
Pour risquer une torche aux vitres ennemies.

Vain combat de la robe et de l'ongle, défaite
Insidieuse et vive en dépit des vertus,
Des ruses, des refus puisque ma lampe atteste
Une langueur et la morsure à vos mains nues.

Or vous régnez, vaincue, sur des sables amers
Où le phénix et le serpent mêlent leurs routes
De songe et de venin.
Absente, votre chair
Ignore au même instant triomphes et déroutes.

French insularity and Parisian provincialism, equally uninterested in poetry, decree that we must have at least one budding artistic school of some sort every year. If it doesn't exist, it has to be invented. The numerous films directed *and* produced by young directors have provided critics with the opportunity of mumble-jumble synthesis required by the game. There are many new or relatively new names on the screens—Resnais, Malle, Chabrol, Truffaut, Molinaro, Camus, Astruc, Bernard-Aubert and others. No doubt this is a good thing, as

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the inspiration of the Old Guard, from Renoir to Becker, seems to have faded away. However, something new is not necessarily qualitatively interesting. One gets a little bored with Youth being palmed off as Genius by sophisticated public relations agents, especially when the youths are anything from twenty-three to forty-seven. The economic circuit has been slightly altered, and that may turn out to be the most important contribution of the new school, if it exists. Louis Malle made his films with family funds. Claude Chabrol invested an inheritance in his first. Others worked more or less on a hire-and-purchase basis. All in all, directors may not have to accept the censorship of producers as much as they used to. This is a reform, hardly a revolution.

Some reputations have been inflated. Astruc's *Une Vie,* after Maupassant, was a painful exercise in technicolor. Ever since the Liberation Alexandre Astruc has been preceded by a reputation and a theory. Up to now nothing has come of them. Louis Malle played safe with *Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud,* an astute detective riddle. Then came *Les Amants,* with a title sufficient to draw crowds from Oslo to Rome. Some people maintain that this film illustrates the modern conception of love and the sexual liberation of women. In fact, it is an extraordinarily conventional piece: young scientist meets lonely wife sick of smart polo-playing lover and country editor husband. Ophelia-like she takes a walk under the park elms and willows before going to bed with the young scientist. They leave together, early in the morning of course, and in the lover's 2CV Citroën—poetic justice presumably, as the other gentlemen sport more highly powered cars. The corny script is not improved by Mme. de Vilmorin's dialogue:

> Husband [with appropriate depth-psychology expression]: Tu es triste?
>
> Wife: Non.
>
> Husband: Pourquoi n'es-tu pas triste?

(Louise de Vilmorin's last *book* is entitled *Migraine.)*

Claude Chabrol is more skilful if not more daring. His characters in *Le Beau Serge* and *Les Cousins* are not very plausible as individuals or types but at least they move about. Naturally, in *Les Cousins* there is a wild, or would-be wild, party. These are increasingly fashionable in our films. Carné went in for them himself in *Les Tricheurs.* Chabrol took up the tradition, substituting Wagner for jazz. Our "revolutionary" young directors are very careful indeed. The only one to have brought something interesting into the technique and the story is Alain Resnais. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is the most original, the most discussed and the most exasperating film of the year. Resnais tried to bring into it a political, a psychological and perhaps a metaphysical dimension. I don't think he has quite succeeded, but I must say that opinions are fiercely divided. The most irritating thing about this film is Marguerite Duras's falsely poetical patter.

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I cannot help feeling that the best films to be seen in Paris are not French. There is certainly nothing up to the Ingmar Bergman standard.

If newcomers have occupied the screens, no young playwrights have emerged recently. Perhaps as a consequence, we've had more and more adaptations, far too many in fact. It needed all Albert Camus's ability as a playwright and novelist, and particularly as an ex-actor and director, to transpose Dostoievsky's *Possessed*. No one without a complex experience of the theatre could have brought it off. It was a monumental achievement and, I believe, a financial flop. Ah, Paris, Cité Lumière! Camus reduced eight hundred pages of winding narrative to four hours of compact dialogue between twenty-three characters. *And* he allowed every one of them, with the exception of Dasha Shatov and Liza Drozdov, to express himself. When Stanislavski attempted the same Everest, he produced a play which lasted five and a half hours. Camus's version wasn't too copious for a modern audience. He intertwined two plots—one concerned with the futile murder of Shatov, the other with Stavrogin's quest for some sort of Absolute in belief and action. To keep the episodes tightly linked together and, at the same time, carefully separated in the time sequence, Camus introduced the narrator, Grigoriev, as a kind of Elizabethan Prologue. He informed the audience of the secondary developments and conveniently provided the stage manager with a few minutes to bring back one of the settings. As the curtain rose, he stepped back into the scene. The main scenes were squeezed into six settings: Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin's elegant drawing-room, Captain Lebyadkin's shabby lodgings, the monastery, the Stavrogins' country house, the hut where Lebyadkin and mad Marya take refuge, the wood where Shatov is murdered. Dostoievsky's text lends itself to theatrical adaptation; many long passages were kept almost whole. The book is full of stage directions, sometimes even pointing to the correct make-up to be used for the different characters. By sacrificing neither time nor space, but finding a balance between both, Camus produced an unquestionably successful play from the dramatic point of view: a melodrama aiming at tragic stylisation with the help of all the tricks of comedy, a Slav drama into which an immense amount of French repartee had been injected at high pressure. It kept one entertained and attentive to the complexity of the intrigue. But in many ways this adaptation illustrated Camus's own view of life better than Dostoievsky's: one wasn't far from the curious climate of *Caligula*.

Ionesco's *Tueur sans gages* was performed in Paris two years after it was written in London. I fail to discern in Ionesco's works, now accepted as normal pieces of furniture in the Parisian setting, the tragic "ontological emptiness" which they are supposed to describe. Most of the time his anti-plays are good, straightforward neo-dadaist or surrealist fun grafted onto a central theme. The central theme was what dadaist or surrealist "plays" lacked. That is why they couldn't attract a

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vast public as Ionesco has now done. *Tueur sans gages* had perhaps more content in its unconventional wild humour than the earlier plays, though one may wonder if saying that "the real revolution takes place in laboratories and in the works of Picasso, Kandinsky and Breton" is committing oneself to anything serious. An individual protest of this kind may have wider implications but here they are buried in all sorts of confusing digressions. It seems at times that Ionesco, splendid mystifier, is in danger of mystifying himself.

Sartre's *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* is almost as difficult to interpret as *Tueur sans gages,* but there is of course a formidable difference between Ionesco and Sartre. One suspects increasingly that Ionesco hasn't really got anything to say. He is merely a very useful and amusing parodist with a weird sense of humour. In his case, looking for a hidden system is a waste of time that is bound to end in loose word-spinning. One may also waste one's time and talk nonsense over Sartre, but there is no doubt at all that every one of his works, however indirectly, connects up with his system. *Les Séquestrés* is another variation on the theme of freedom and responsibility, although it stands by itself, and one does not have to refer to *L'Etre et le Néant* in order to appreciate it. It is an ambiguous and ambitious play, quite traditional in structure with one or two curious technical flashbacks. Franz von Gerlach, son of a German industrial magnate, has been living shut up in a room of the family mansion near Hamburg. As an adolescent he once tried to protect a rabbi who had escaped from a nearby concentration camp. The rabbi was killed under Franz's eyes by the Nazis. Franz became an officer on the Russian front. And there, this pure-hearted Absolute-searching youth tortured some partisans. This of course comes out as the play progresses. From Russia Franz walked back to Germany through Poland. After a fight with an American officer he had to disappear legally, and is supposed to have died in South America. Locked up in his room, he refuses to see his father because the old man may be responsible for the rabbi's death and because he accepted Nazi rule. Old von Gerlach has a cancer but even so his son won't see him. Franz is mad. He now lectures himself and a world of mysterious beings, "the ceiling crabs," about his motives and intentions, about the responsibility of Germany, about the destiny of Man in this age: "For twenty years it's been midnight in this age and it's not easy to keep one's eyes open at midnight." Franz von Gerlach is even more fascinating and certainly more complex than the Garcin of *Huis-Clos.* He is a lucid liar who sees through his own bluff. He breaks into self-criticism and then into pathos and a full-hearted vindication of his acts. He drops into self-pity, bounces back into the past to avoid the present, and appeals to the future—to the "crabs." Goetz in *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* was not a better dialectician. Serge Reggiani plays this difficult part remarkably well, so well that he almost crushes all the other actors, Ledoux in the part of the Hindenburgian father, Marie Olivier

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as the incestuous sister and Evelyn Rey as the sister-in-law who falls in love with Franz. After Reggiani, the best actor is the tape-recorder which plays an important part in the play as Franz dictates for hypothetical accusers his defense and that of his age. At the end, Franz and his father have departed together. They are going to die. The tape-recorder is left alone on the stage addressing itself to the audience:

> Centuries, here's my lonely and misshapen century, the Accused. This century would have been good had man not been watched by his cruel, immemorial enemy, by the ferocious species that had sworn to destroy him, by the hairless and malignant beast, Man. One plus one equals one: that is all our mystery. My client was the first to experience shame. He knows he's naked. And now for the main reason. Lovely children, you come out of us, our pains made you. This century is a woman. It's in labour. Will you condemn your own mother? Come on, reply.... The thirtieth century doesn't answer. Perhaps there won't be any centuries after ours. Perhaps a bomb will have blown out all the lights. All will be dead: eyes, judges and Time. Night, O tribunal of night, you who were, who will be, who is, I was, I was, I, Franz von Gerlach, here, in this room I took my century on my shoulders and I said: I'll answer for it. This day and forever.

Notes on Contributors (*cont.*)

ANNE SEXTON'S first book of poems, *To Bedlam and Part Way Back,* will be published by Houghton Mifflin in March.

S. S. GARDONS is the pseudonym of a former Hudson Review Fellow in Poetry who now teaches at Wayne State University.

NORMAN N. HOLLAND teaches Shakespeare at M.I.T. and is the author of the recently published book, *The First Modern Comedies* (Harvard University Press).

A collection of WILLIAM STAFFORD'S poems, *West of Your City,* will be brought out by Talisman Press in the Spring.

JAMES DICKEY'S first book, to be called *Into the Stone,* is to be published by Scribner's next Summer.

In addition to his writing on the foreign film, VERNON YOUNG has accepted an acting assignment in a Swedish film production.

This is the first appearance of EDWIN DENBY, the noted dance critic, in these pages.

OLIVIER TODD is this Review's regular Paris correspondent.

Recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, ANTHONY HECHT is currently living in New York.

WARD HOOKER teaches at Bucknell University. This is his first appearance in this Review.

ARTHUR J. KNODEL is Professor in French at the University of Southern California. He is the author of articles on St.-John Perse and other French writers.

LOUIS SIMPSON'S new book of poems, *A Dream of Governors,* was published in September by Wesleyan University Press. Mr. Simpson teaches at the University of California in Berkeley.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS will be in Dublin in February to do research on the backgrounds of *Ulysses.*

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ANTHONY HECHT

The Anguish of the Spirit and the Letter[1]

VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S SLIM VOLUME contains fourteen poems, with the notation on the fly-leaf: "His complete poetic works in English." Perhaps this is meant to remind us pleasantly of Max Beerbohm's first volume, printed when he was twenty-four, and titled, *The Complete Works of Max Beerbohm.* In any case, he is a graceful and amusing poet, he is a Russian, he is the author of a particularly celebrated novel, and he has been famously at work for many years on a translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin,* turning it first into prose and then trying to fit that tough, unyielding substance into Pushkin's elaborate stanzas. As a sort of by-product of that prodigious work, he has written a poem of which the first stanza runs:

What is translation? On a platter
A poet's pale and glaring head,
A parrot's screech, a monkey's chatter,
And profanation of the dead.
The parasites you were so hard on
Are pardoned if I have your pardon,
O, Pushkin, for my stratagem:
I travelled down your secret stem,
And reached the root, and fed upon it;
Then, in a language newly learned,
I grew another stalk and turned
Your stanza patterned on a sonnet,
Into my honest roadside prose—
All thorn, but cousin to your rose.

This is Pushkin's stanza, and Mr. Nabokov's success in keeping it from sounding like Praed at his flightiest (as Edmund Wilson suggests that it sometimes does) is impressive; for the double rhymes, the feminine endings, invite a frivolity which the serious parts of that great narrative cannot endure. Mr. Nabokov has also written a poem called, "An Evening of Russian Poetry," which has for its setting some polished girls'

[1] POEMS, by *Vladimir Nabokov.* Doubleday. $3.00. O TO BE A DRAGON, by *Marianne Moore.* Viking. $2.75. SUMMER KNOWLEDGE, by *Delmore Schwartz.* Doubleday. $4.95. A DREAM OF GOVERNORS, by *Louis Simpson.* Wesleyan University Press. $1.65. SAINT JUDAS, by *James Wright.* Wesleyan University Press. $1.65. COLONEL JOHNSON'S RIDE, by *Robert Huff.* Wayne State University Press. $2.75. MEXICO CITY BLUES, by *Jack Kerouac.* Grove Press. $3.95.

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college. The poem is touching and funny, dealing lightly with the failure of communication, not only of the mysterious Russian Mind and Language to an earnest young audience, but between the speaker and the students as humans speaking the same language. Some of the poems in this book are very slight; it is occasionally Mr. Nabokov's pleasure to take a particularly grisly subject and write about it in tripping anapests. In every case he stands at a polite remove from experience, and even when he deals with violence or madness or the grotesque it is always with a flawless social poise.

Thomas Hardy once wrote an ode "In Celebration of the Centenary of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals." It is a bad poem from every point of view: stilted, outrageous diction, deformed syntax, and a throbbing sentimentality that spatters its pure heartsblood over everything in sight. It should be quite possible to prize animals for their beauty and utility, and to be offended by brutality against them without writing,

> *Cries are still heard in secret nooks,*
> *Till hushed with gag or slit or thud;*
> *And hideous dens whereon none looks*
> *Are sprayed with needless blood.*

The Society might do better in appropriating to itself any number of poems by Marianne Moore, but I would recommend to their particular attention a poem called "Saint Nicholas," from her newest book. It is a beautiful poem in the form of a prayer to the saint, and the height of her desires at Christmas is for a postcard reproduction of the famous painting of St. Hubert, the hunter converted by the sight of a stag with a crucifix growing between its antlers. The poem has all the gentleness, affection, and witty, practical language that Miss Moore always brings to these subjects, but this poem in particular does everything Hardy failed to do so miserably and so often. And if the Society is going to follow my advice, they should furthermore gratefully supply Miss Moore with a well-tailored suit of *qiviut* ("the underwool of the arctic ox") which she has asked for outright in two poems. They would be getting their money's worth (I assume the Society is reasonably wealthy, and could even throw in a vicuna coat without noticing the pinch, if they cared to) and indeed they might rejoice in almost everything in this book, though by no means all of the poems are concerned with animals. Miss Moore never loses her poise and wit, though there is one poem here that inspires embarrassing doubts about just what she is up to. It suggests to me a nightclub act at, say, Upstairs at the Downstairs, where Miss Moore and Burl Ives, accompanied by his guitar, render to the tune: "Li'l baby, don't say a word: Mama goin' to buy you a mocking-bird" (one of the best known songs in Mr. Ives' repertoire), the following verses in praise of the Brooklyn Dodgers' World Series victory in 1956:

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"Millennium," yes; "pandemonium"!
Roy Campanella leaps high. Dodgerdom

crowned, had Johnny Podres on the mound.
Buzzie Bavasi and the Press gave ground. . . .

I can imagine Mr. Ives, who has a keen sense of rhythm and is no slouch as a singer, never getting through the first distich, and leaving Miss Moore to go it alone, with only the most tentative guitar behind her. It is well known that Miss Moore is a loyal Dodger fan (or was, till they left Brooklyn) and I'm sure the tribute to them is meant simply and sincerely. But if at the same time she intends a joke at her own expense, at the "unsingability" of her style of poetry (the instructions about the tune are hers) it is a joke that seems to me in bad taste. She has more than once been self-deprecating in a humorous way, but usually with a firm control that made the reader see that here was a poet who knew how easily modesty can become the ingenious disguise of vanity. And that sort of superb moral balance, that heightened, brilliant sanity is operating in this book almost everywhere as beautifully, delicately and lovingly as ever before.

In *Summer Knowledge,* Delmore Schwartz offers a generous selection of his poems written over a period of twenty years, and in several ways this is an astonishing book. To begin with, it shows with what seems to me remarkable clarity the development of a man's imagination over a long period of time. And that development has not been smooth and gradual; it has been filled with sudden breaks and new starts that are rash and audacious and unbelievably risky. Yeats apart, I can think of no other poet of recent times, except Robert Lowell, who, after having found an idiom which he could manage with certainty and success, has had the courage of such radical innovation. Mr. Schwartz has divided his book into eight sections, but from the point of view of style, it falls conveniently, like Gaul, into three parts. The first of these, comprising about the first 150 pages of the book, contains almost all the poems that the anthologists have made him famous for, and many others that are just as good, and ought to be as well known. They are the poems of a gifted young man, and in these pages Mr. Schwartz presents himself, to borrow the phrase of another young poet, as "a dialectical cat." They are primarily poems of ideas, and this seems to be true in more than the sense that they pullulate with the ghosts of Socrates and Plato and other great figures of the past. In an effort to keep life at a balanced and forensic distance even when it made its most passionate claims upon him, he evolved a technique of imagination which may have derived from somewhere among the works of "knock-kneed Hegel," as Mr. Schwartz calls him more than once. The poems are constructed almost ritually in terms of polarities, and every thesis invites its antithesis. (People lolling on the beach, reduced to a semi-naked, classless simplicity of delight in nature, are observed by Henry James, "The

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novelist tangential on the boardwalk . . . That nervous conscience amid the concessions." The body heavily humiliates the spirit. Personal consciousness can or cannot feel its connection with history. There is a "contradiction in every act.") These are not so much themes as specimens of an imaginative method which will allow the poet to occupy two places at once, so to speak. He does this with such skill that you suspect he could take either side of an issue, and there are two companion poems in which he does precisely this. In the second part of the book, Mr. Schwartz sticks his neck out with reckless abandon by offering Shakespeare's "Coriolanus" in the form of a narrative poem in blank verse, with a series of vaudeville turns at the *entr'actes* in the form of prose monologues addressed to the theater audience by the not entirely guileless young poet. They are a sort of intellectual slapstick, a deadpan humor that comes off, at its very best, in a moot and muted way. The blank verse sections are not straight narrative, but provide their own commentary by describing a performance of the play as witnessed by the poet who shares his box with the ghosts of Aristotle, Freud, Marx, Beethoven, and an unidentified spook who says nothing and never reveals himself, though the poet is continually asking the others who he is. At the end we are given a dim and ambiguous hint by Aristotle: "He is the one who saw what you did not . . . He is the one you do not know, my dear." This seems a little out of character for Aristotle, and the last line is certainly superfluous, but I think we are meant to understand that the unknown witness is the poet at some future, more mature period, who cannot communicate with his young self, or perhaps the poet's conscience, troubled into silence by this terrible drama of subtle pride. It might even be Shakespeare, unwilling to comment on all the commentary. The fact that we can come to such diverse conclusions is not consoling after the poet has tried so much to make suspense out of his persistent inquiries. The other ghosts, however, have been busily at work commenting on the action before them, and I suppose it is intended as a tribute to Shakespeare's Universal Genius that they all are able to see his play as a confirmation of their own theories and attitudes about life. I cannot think this is a credit to any of them, including Shakespeare. Finally, there is the drama of Coriolanus himself. Mr. Schwartz has been faithful to Shakespeare's version of the story and to some of his language. The problem for the poet was to find an idiom of speech that would allow him to quote from the original when he chose, and still leave him free to write in a manner that did not on the one hand sound like imitation Shakespeare, and on the other like the jazzy lingo of modern American speech. The result is smooth enough and never jars, but it is nevertheless a bastard language, a compromise. Something of the sort was no doubt necessary in order to let the hero speak and have Karl Marx speak right after him, but it means that the Elizabethan language, in the lines more or less quoted from the play, has been toned down by

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the occasional substitution of conventional words for astonishing Shakespearean ones to make things more harmonious. The final effect of the whole work is not one of integration, however; there are too many centers of interest competing with one another. But the balance of tragic action with comic commentary is often very deftly handled and the particular, rich kind of comedy employed here has, at its best, a puzzling substratum of pathos.

The last part of the book covers about 100 pages and is again a new departure for the poet. These poems are freer, metrically and emotionally, than the earlier ones. It seems as if the polarities of the early poems, always linked in a nagging, bitter, or ironic marriage, have been divorced and are trying to work out their own lives as discrete and separate attitudes. They are not always entirely self-possessed in their new independence, but Mr. Schwartz's ability to offer them this freedom is in itself a remarkable achievement. Some are still bitter, most are joyous, few are well-controlled, but all are hip-high in the emotional stir of things that the earlier poems had kept at a formal and symmetrical remove. One general word: there is very little visual interest in this poet's work, and I should think that there are probably more abstract nouns and adjectives per page in this book than in the work of almost any other modern writer in English. Now there is a victorious current opinion that poems without lots of images (the more the better) are not poetry. Its anthem is, "No ideas but in things"; it has connections not only with Imagism but with many different schools of modern criticism. Just what the defenders of this faith are able to make of "Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing," or "Rose-cheek'd Laura, Come," I am not sure, but I suppose they would be obliged to say these were not poems. Mr. Schwartz is neither Shakespeare nor Campion; he has a voice of his own, like any poet worth reading, and he deserves to be read.

The readers of *Hudson Review* are already familiar with the poetry of Louis Simpson, whose work has often appeared in these pages. But it is hard to realize how consistently excellent and various his work can be without reading carefully through his book again and again. This is one of the best new books of poetry in years. He commands a style capable of great emotional range, at once witty and dramatic, sometimes spare and ironic, sometimes frighteningly phantasmagoric, always inventive and not infrequently beautiful. His subject matter covers more ground, geographically, historically, and mythically, than almost any young poet writing today, and without in any sense being a "War Poet" he has written the best poems to come out of the Second World War. His image of America is real and complex, urban and rural, tawdry and powerful, and he is able to make us feel both our connection with the Old World of Europe and our independence of it. I hardly know what to quote to show Mr. Simpson's versatility, but these snippets, even out of context, ought to indicate something.

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Venice, the city built on speculation,
Still stands on it. Love sails from India
And Sweden—every hanging cloud pours out
A treasure chest.
It's love on the Rialto, news of love,
That gives Antonio his golden life,
Even to Envy, sharpening a knife,
His interest. . . .

The barns like scarlet lungs are breathing in
Pneumonia. The North wind smells of iron.
It's winter on the farm. The Hupmobile
That broke its back is dying at the fence. . . .

"Did you not call?" she said,
"Goodbye, then! For I go
Where I am wanted."
Till dawn I tossed in bed
Wishing that I could know
Who else she haunted.

But this is not very satisfactory. It does not show, for instance, how Mr. Simpson can take a particularly unprepossessing petit-bourgeois French family, and by setting them upon the beach in "Côte d'Azur" amid foreign tourists laved in wealth and fame and ambition and self-love, make of them in their vulgar simplicity the loveliest things in the scene. Neither does it show Mr. Simpson's awful skill in rendering a clear picture of perverse Nazi insanity in "The Bird." Nor does it show the light and piercing wit of poems like "The Green Shepherd" or "The Custom of the World." He is a poet from whom it is hard to excerpt anything, for his design and tone depend upon the whole. His worst fault, I think, is to succumb to a kind of lyric neatness, a too pat arrangement of lines and words. For example,

There are designs in curtains that can kill,
Insidious intentions in a chair;
In conversation, silence, sitting still,
The demon of decorum and despair.

You would not guess, from the somewhat trivial artificiality of this first stanza, with its careful alliterations and precise rhetorical balances, how genuine, imaginative and free the rest of the poem is. This is a small fault, and Mr. Simpson doesn't let it happen very often. His publishers, who have had the good sense to publish him, have had the poor sense to remark in their advertising zeal that he has "a simplicity of form and phrase that has been compared to William Blake's. . . ." I cannot imagine by whom, but the comparison is misleading and unfair. Simpson is neither a mystic nor a symbolist. He has wonderfully

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assimilated his sources, which were more visible in earlier work, and Blake was not one of them. He is thoroughly American in style and attitude, and he is a man the Pulitzer Committee should regard with a thoughtful and appraising eye.

James Wright is a gifted young poet who is trying to write the most difficult kind of poetry: the poetry of wisdom. He has said of his new book: "I have tried to shape these poems, singly and as a group, in order to ask some moral questions: Exactly what *is* good and humane action? And, even if one knows what such action is, then exactly why should he perform it?" This is an ambitious program, though one would suppose it was an unlikely way to go about composing a poem. But Mr. Wright is very nearly as good as his word, and I feel in his work a double stress: an attempt to realize the common dramatic occasion, and an attempt to evaluate it. These two factors sometimes present themselves in sequence, as if the poet had said to himself, "Here is what happened; what am I to think of it?" The peculiar temptations of such an approach ought to be clear, and one of them is to regard the event as no more than the occasion for meditation. This sort of imbalance between his twin effects happens more than once in Mr. Wright's books, most decisively to his disadvantage in "At the Slackening of the Tide." This poem of seven stanzas begins,

> *Today I saw a woman wrapped in rags*
> *Leaping along the beach to curse the sea.*
> *Her child lay floating in the oil, away*
> *From oarlocks, gunwale, and the blades of oars.*
> *The skinny lifeguard, raging at the sky,*
> *Vomited sea, and fainted on the sand.*

But as if a strict contemplation of this scene were too much to bear, the poem removes itself to commentary, and not even direct commentary: a self-interested, philosophic calm pervades almost all the rest of the stanzas until we come upon the wonderful last lines,

> *I bowed my head, and heard the sea far off*
> *Washing its hands.*

If this is one of the dangers Mr. Wright exposes himself to, there is another that goes along with it as a kind of corollary. His moral attitudes, when thus encountered in isolation, are sometimes a trifle self-conscious, and incline to draw attention to his fine sense of tact or his winning humility. And we cannot help feeling that behind this posture lies a very strong sense of pride.

I have begun by noticing these defects only because Mr. Wright is such a good poet that his work not only demands our most ruthless examination, but at its best triumphs over our last and most exacting scruples. He knows as well as any poet now writing, and better than most, that life proposes its beautiful or terrible conditions which must

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be met and managed in exhausting human terms before they ever get into poetry at all. If he is too young to be called "wise," he at least knows that his poetry must come from what wisdom he can command, and his book represents a good deal more than mere ambition. At its best there is no visible distinction between event and commentary; the event is seen with such clarity and complexity as to define a whole moral universe by implication. He is well past the beginning of wisdom in even desiring and attempting poetry of this kind: it calls for the commitment and the ultimate integration of the whole man, not merely a development and exhibition of his particular gifts for verbal music or wit or startling images. To show him at his best would require quoting at length, and space is lacking; but rather than not quote at all, let me offer one example, necessarily abridged and therefore crucially deformed: here are the first and last stanzas of "A Note Left in Jimmy Leonard's Shack."

Near the dry river's water-mark we found
Your brother Minnegan,
Flopped like a fish against the muddy ground.
Beany, the kid whose yellow hair turns green,
Told me to find you, even in the rain,
And tell you he was drowned.

Beany went home, and I got sick and ran,
You old son of a bitch.
You better hurry down to Minnegan;
He's drunk or dying now, I don't know which,
Rolled in the roots and garbage like a fish,
The poor old man.

On the fly-leaf of Robert Huff's first book of poems, *Colonel Johnson's Ride,* there is a little biographical note, which includes this sentence: "For his primary and advanced poetical training, he is grateful 'to the shores of Lake Michigan near Saugertuck, Michigan, and to the forests of the Northwest.'" It is in these settings that he has found much of his subject matter, and the poems exhibit an intimate love of the natural world, seen with a hunter's skill and a native's knowedge and delight. But the sentence quoted above strikes me as a trifle disingenuous. There are some powerful literary influences at work fighting for the possession of Mr. Huff's soul, and if it is true that they don't win it away from him, they leave their legible marks. One of them is Robert Lowell, and another is William Empson, and they are both exacting masters. Lowell's influence is to be caught in the wracked, convulsive, tormented composition of some of these poems, the torment coming from the spirit's difficulty with what has to be said, the language exploding into articulation as if to say, "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." This is not just idle imitation; the struggle is there, it is real, and it is in the poems. Empson's influence is less

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central, but is as clearly to be seen in an elaborate ingeniousness, an inventive superstructure of puns and word-plays, offered as a gratuitous pleasure or game. For example, a poem to his daughter, Ursula, begins with a reference to the constellation of the Great Bear, refers to the child as "my she-cub" and "my fuzzy animal," and not only continues the bear image through references to hibernation but plays with terms like "unbearable" and "bearing north." When this quality comes too much to the surface, the feeling is of a tour-de-force, though it leaves no doubt of Mr. Huff's technical accomplishments. But what is to be noticed with particular satisfaction about this book is that Mr. Huff has a voice of his own, singular, resonant, and full of mystery, which can be heard for all the welter of influences of his distinguished teachers. I am obliged, in a review of this sort, to represent him at something like his best in a very short compass, and this is very hard because he has not only written many good poems, but they are good in many different ways. What follows, therefore, is by no means representative of everything he can do, but it does show him doing something very well.

THE SMOKER

Sitting down near him in the shade,
I watch him strike a match on his white cane.
He burns his fingers but displays no pain.
This smiling blind man with a hearing aid

Smokes by the hour. Now he's blowing rings.
He measures in the smoke and takes much care
To shape his mouth for pumping circled air.
He fathers hundreds of round hoverings.

I offer: It's too warm; it ought to rain.
His only comment is a smiling cough.
Maybe he's got his hearing aid turned off
To keep such interference from his brain,

Or can't hear through the haze, or won't let sound
Disturb his gentle passion. Who can tell
What he envisions with his sense of smell
Heaving my presence at him by the pound?

I never blame him when he comes in dreams,
A slow smile smoking, circled to the thighs,
And screws both of his thumbs into my eyes
And will not stop or listen to my screams.

Mexico City Blues is composed of 242 poems, or "choruses," as Mr. Kerouac ingeniously calls them. They are all short, none longer than a page, and the proper way to read this book, taking a tip from Poe, is straight through at one sitting. What emerges is surprising in many

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ways, for Mr. Kerouac is not beyond offering some very misleading appearances. For example, there is his declaration: "I want to be considered a jazz poet blowing a long blues in an afternoon jam session on Sunday. . . . my ideas vary and sometimes roll from chorus to chorus or from halfway through a chorus to halfway into the next." His publishers have been delighted to amplify this note of American pastoralism, of the poet warbling his woodwind wild, spontaneous, simple, unbeguiled. They remark on his "improvised, nervous beat" and carry on in the heady vocabulary of *Metronome*. But this image of the seely swain is one of the poet's little impostures; his is a very "literary" book. It might have been called, "Kerouac's Cool Cantos, or, The Devaluated Pound." The structure of the whole volume is based on Pound's (as he called it) "fugal" method of interwoven themes, taking up one subject, dropping it, returning to it in altered words as a variation of the theme. (I like to wonder how many of Mr. Kerouac's admirers can comfortably imagine him writing fugues, or would be willing to trade Charley Parker for Johann Sebastian Bach.) And Pound is not the only derivative force at work: Dr. Williams is here, and so is Gertrude Stein, who has shown the poet how to make nonsense syllables out of words and words out of nonsense syllables. There is E. E. Cummings, who has shown him how to use nursery rhymes with wry and slapstick irony. There is a straightforward "Imagist" poem (chorus 151). There is even (bless his sophisticated literary soul) James Joyce: "Then all's wet underneath, to Eclipse / (Ivan the Heaven Sea-Ice King, Euclid, / Bloody Be Jupiter, Nucleus, / Nuclid, What's-His-Name—the sea / The sea-drang Scholar with mermaids, / Bloody blasted dadflap thorn it / — Neppy Tune —) / All's wet clear to Neptune's Seat."

If these writers give Mr. Kerouac a great many roles to play, they by no means exhaust his repertoire, for he also delights to adopt the garb of the Buddhist Sage. I know little about Buddhism, and am prepared to be instructed, but I do know that at the very least it is a taxing and difficult discipline to which serious and gifted men devote their entire lives; and I suspect that some of its more devout oriental practitioners would envy (if this were not contrary to the very spirit of their undertaking) the superb ease with which Mr. Kerouac attains his perfect exaltations. At least three or four times in this volume alone he "makes the scene," the seventh state of enlightenment, the first and last wisdom which is transcendent, ecstatic, coalescent. I think sadly of poor Plotinus, who in his small way, dedicated his life to just such a mode of apprehending ultimate truth, but who knew that in our present state of existence these visionary glimpses of totality were bound to be short and few, and who was forced to admit of himself and his most distinuished disciple, "I myself have realized it but three times as yet, and Porphyry hitherto not once."

And there is a related problem that can best be presented by quotation.

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Got up and dressed up
and went out & got laid
Then died and got buried
in a coffin in the grave,
Man—
Yet everything is perfect,
Because it is empty
Because it is perfect
with emptiness,
Because it's not even happening. (113th Chorus)

. . . . . Death, the no-buzz,
no-voices, is, must be, the same,
as life. . . . .

I know that I'm dead.
I won't camp. I'm dead now.
. . . . . .
How do I now that I'm dead.
Because I'm alive
and I got work to do. . . (235th Chorus)

What seems to me interesting here is the poet's obvious satisfaction with this complete identity of life and death. It is of course, as he realizes, an evasion of morality: in that timeless state nothing happens, so there are no consequences. I understand that Buddhists conceive of a state of being beyond morality, but I do not believe that their discipline directs them toward bliss by ignoring moral issues. Be that as it may, the interested reader is invited to compare passages like those above with another work on the same theme by T. S. Eliot, called "Sweeney Agonistes," with particular attention to the part that begins "I knew a man once did a girl in," and continuing through the line, "Death is life and life is death." Needless to say, in Eliot's little drama this conclusion is not arrived at with any composure or cheerfulness. As to which of these poets provides the most truthful and comprehensive vision of life, the reader must decide for himself.

But in spite of all the defences that have to be broken through, all the illusions Kerouac creates about himself as prophet of salvation, literary eclectic, Daphnis knocking off some hot licks on his oaten straw, there is something valuable and beguiling behind the poetry which is as curiously difficult to get at as if the book were translated from another tongue. The poet's gift for masquerade is first-class, and he is very hard to locate. But what seems to me to emerge at the end is a voice of remarkable kindness and gentleness, an engaging and modest good humor and a quite genuine spiritual simplicity that convinces as all the dogmatic assertions and affirmations did not. This is the voice of a man who has a lot of knick-knacks and hocus-pocus to get rid of, but it is the voice of a man.

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WARD HOOKER

Giraudoux's Last Play

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTOPHER FRY'S NEW TRANSLATION of *Pour Lucrèce,* the last of Jean Giraudoux's plays, is important enough to be signalized as a literary event. For in *Duel of Angels*[1] and *Tiger at the Gates* Fry has given us the best of Giraudoux—and has given it, as William Becker said of *Tiger* in his review in this magazine, "on Giraudoux's own terms."[2] No one seems inclined to doubt the high position of *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* in the Giraudoux canon, nor that of Fry as a translator. But *Pour Lucrèce* has not yet had an international hearing; and in addition to reviewing Fry's translation I would like to support the claim of *Pour Lucrèce* to be called "the best of Giraudoux."

As in *Tiger at the Gates,* Fry has succeeded by not trying to outdo his original in wittiness, and by achieving something like a Giralducian economy. It is a literal translation, yet surprisingly short, and it conveys with startling fidelity not only the sense but the tone and rhythm of the French dialogue. A fair example of the texture may be given from the beginning of Act I Scene 8, when Lucile and Paula, protagonist and antagonist, finally come to the point of verbal combat:

PAOLA. Je viens vous dire ce que vous êtes.
LUCILE. Je le sais. Je suis une femme qui déteste les femmes telles que vous.
PAOLA. C'est plus simple. Vous êtes une femme qui aime les hommes.
LUCILE. Sans aucun doute. J'aime les hommes qui ont droit à leur nom d'homme.
PAOLA. Duguesclin? Colbert? Le saint qui recueillait les enfants? J'ai oublié son nom.
LUCILE. Vous ne l'avez pas oublié. Il s'est retiré de vous.
PAOLA. Grand bien lui fasse. Je suis assez loyale vis-à-vis de moi-même pour juger et voir les

PAULA. I've come to tell you what you are.
LUCILE. I already know. I'm someone who can't bear women like you.
PAULA. Even simpler than that. You're a woman who loves men.
LUCILE. That may be, when they've earned the right to be called men.
PAULA. Like Charlemagne, for instance? Or Alexander? Or that saint who took such care of the children? I've forgotten his name.
LUCILE. You haven't forgotten it. It's avoiding you.
PAULA. Much good may it do it. But I'm more honest with myself; I can see them and judge

[1] DUEL OF ANGELS, by *Jean Giraudoux*. Translated by *Christopher Fry*. Oxford University Press. $3.00.

[2] William Becker: "Some French Plays in Translation," *The Hudson Review,* Vol. IX, No. 2 (Summer 1956), p. 280.

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hommes sans leur mettre ces masques que sont les grands hommes.
LUCILE. On fréquente qui vous reçoit.

them, without having to make great men out of them first.
LUCILE. One visits where one is received.

Fry seems to apprehend almost intuitively the right connotations, the sometimes elusive word values which carry forward the Giraudoux "debate" dialogue. The idea of intuition suggests itself because the same kind of rhetorical felicities can be found in Fry's own *Venus Observed:* perhaps he accomplishes these miracles of correspondence because he and Giraudoux are, in all that relates to cadence and imagery, *affinés.*

In spite of the prevailing French opinion that the posthumous plays represent Giraudoux in decline, I believe that he continued to develop, especially in mastery of the dramatic form, until the very end of his life. Of *La Folle de Chaillot,* Réné Bizet said in 1946, "Ce n'est pas du bon Giraudoux parce que ce n'est pas du Giraudoux *châtié.*" And yet this "undisciplined" play, which explored a background and a realm of characterization that Giraudoux had never considered before, was more universal in its appeal to cosmopolitan audiences than anything Giraudoux had produced. The second posthumous play, *Pour Lucrèce,* was climactic in its kind also: it brought to fulfilment all the promises of his earlier tragedies. Structurally it seems to me the most perfect of all his tragedies; it is Giraudoux *châtié.*

Bert M. P. Leefmans has very ably indicated the shortcomings of Giraudoux's mythology plays when measured as tragedies:

> *La Guerre de Troie* is perhaps in a sense the most tragic of Giraudoux's plays since it is the only one in which the world's events are as important as the characters who represent what to Giraudoux is best in humanity. . . . In *Electre* as in *Judith* the heroine may be too much more important than the events in which she is involved for the outcome to be tragic.
>
> The actors are essences themselves . . . and thus their inevitable responsibility for what happens may seem too little a part of character, and too much a part of what they stand for, to provoke tragic pity.[3]

Considering these points in reverse order, I would like to show first that Lucile is the most fully realized of Giraudoux's dramatic heroines, and second that because of its structure and its portrayal of "the world's events" *Pour Lucrèce* should prove to be the most satisfactory of the tragedies.

[3] Professor Leefmans' discussion constitutes a chapter of his *Modern Tragedy: Five Adaptations of Oresteia and Oedipus,* a Columbia dissertation which, unfortunately, is available only in typescript.

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Lucile belongs to the line of Giralducian "essence" heroines, or embodiments of Platonic absolutes, that began in the novel with Suzanne of *Suzanne et le Pacifique* and in the theatre with the Alcmène of *Amphitryon 38*. The charm and individuality of these abstract characters derive from their logical outlook and their integrity, the perfect *clarté* with which they confront a muddled or evil society. It is as though, having been endowed from first childhood with the certainty of what is right ("first" is a favorite word of Giraudoux; all of these characters were born in Eden) they maintained this certainty in later life with absolute logic, acting upon it in the world with a kind of divine authority like that of the apparently simple Prince Myshkin of Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*.

Now the danger in turning such characters loose in a world of rigorous circumstance is precisely what Professor Leefmans pointed out—that responsibility for the outcome may seem "too little a part of character, and too much a part of what they stand for." If a character is made too "essential" it will stand in relation to the plot only as a *fantoche* in a puppet-show; while on the other hand if it is given too much individuality it may become incomprehensible. And the earlier "essence" heroines of Giraudoux were not very convincing, especially when considered as characters to be seen on the stage. The Isabelle of *Intermezzo,* for instance, is certainly a captivating *jeune fille* who endears herself to the audience by her attitude toward the children and their education, toward the stupidities "both of man and nature," toward her own marriage. But the main concern of the plot is her attitude toward death, in the person of the "Spectre." Parallel interests in children and dead people are not exactly easy to equate; and one cannot help feeling that Isabelle's essence, her enlightened optimism, evaporates in the penumbral atmosphere of another world. A similar confusion undermines the plot of *Judith* when the heroine kills Holopherne because she loves him, thus leaving the audience baffled.

Alcmène, as the "essence" of fidelity to her husband Amphitryon, seems at first the logical development of a Giralducian *jeune femme;* but her characterization is not satisfactorily completed. Neither in *Siegfried* nor in *Amphitryon 38* is adequate opposition offered the central characters; they are "let off easily" and thus the abstractions which they represent are not tested. Alcmène's first scenes with Jupiter, her scenes with Amphitryon and with Léda, gave theatre-goers their first impression of a Giraudoux absolute heroine disposing of the real and supernatural worlds, and they firmly established the tradition. But *Amphitryon 38* is weakened by an arbitrary happy ending in which Jupiter lets himself be talked into accepting friendship, not love. An altogether Platonic Jupiter, indeed. As Benjamin Crémieux said in 1930, "le roi des Dieux, quand une fois il aime une mortelle, ne se contente pas si facilement de son amitié!" The effect is anomalous, almost grotesque: a comic *deus ex machina*.

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Lucile as an "essence" somewhat resembles Alcmène, but in the Platonic hierarchy she embodies something higher than fidelity to a husband: she is purity itself. This identification makes her responsible not only for her own fidelity but for the marriage vow in general, and naturally it gives her in Aix-en-Provence the position of a reformer—but with a difference. The difference may be seen clearly in Fry's rendering of the first scene, when Lucile's *confidante* Eugénie chides her as a reformer, and they start the debate about Paula and Armand, the "disloyal wife and unperceiving husband":

> EUGENIE. Life is very hard for women like Paula. What they would really like is to be virgin for each new lover as he comes along. But what can they do? They have twenty loves, and only one body.
> LUCILE. They have twenty bodies, and no love whatsoever.
> EUGENIE. It maddens me to listen to you professing virtue in a tea-shop, like a martyr professing his faith in the arena. It's in bad taste, and with a tigress like Paula, it's dangerous.
> LUCILE. You make me sound ridiculous when you say "virtue." What have I said that has anything to do with being virtuous?
> EUGENIE. Well, purity, if you like.
> LUCILE. A beautiful word.
> EUGENIE. Words have no connection with all this.
> LUCILE. For me they have. And I will tell you which words: words like fountain, spring-water, crystal, and clarity. Don't try and make me pity a disloyal wife and an unperceiving husband, when there are words like truth and innocence. You should imitate me a little, trust less to your thoughts and more to language. That's why I can be glad to open my eyes every morning. A flight of pure words lifts me into the sunshine.
> EUGENIE. The word love isn't so ugly.
> LUCILE. I'm sure it isn't. Tell Armand so. I have cleansed it for him; you will see the strength it has now.

Lucile's function as a "reformer," then, is not the negative one exercised by the WCTU, of nagging or prying upon neighbors, but a positive allegiance to her Platonic ideal, implemented by her refusal to acknowledge anyone or any action that falls short of it. Such is her love of this ideal, which she modestly calls a "word," that when she is told that she has been raped while unconscious, her immediate logical thought is that she now has two husbands. The spurious one must obviously be eliminated: she tries to persuade the putative seducer Marcellus to kill himself. Failing in this, she accepts Armand, now an admirer of her uncompromising purity even though he has had to abandon an unfaithful wife because of it, as her champion to kill Marcellus in a duel. Persisting in her conviction that she has two husbands, she shows the same integrity in explaining the affair to her husband, M. le Procureur Impérial Lionel Blanchard:

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LIONEL. A man has dared to lay hands on you?
LUCILE. He has dared to marry me.
LIONEL. Stop using that ridiculous word! A man has touched you!
LUCILE. My word is the right word. . . .

The widowhood for which she longs is not to be an extended one: she will shortly take poison. But Lionel is no Platonist, and Lucile goes to her death with her "true word" uncomprehended by him.

The Platonism underlying this play is uncomprehended by a good many people who merely hear of Lucile's curious notion, without seeing or reading *Pour Lucrèce,* and even by some critics. Of the "true word" *épouser* Marianne Mercier-Campiche wrote, "Lucile fait d'un acte sale, l'accouplement d'un satyre et d'une femme inconsciente, l'image de l'union conjugale. Certes nous savons que la femme du Procureur est pure, est blanche, mais elle l'est surtout à la façon d'une oie." Here is the worldly view of the matter, but it misses the whole point of *Pour Lucrèce,* and the meaning of Lucile's death. The world affords many examples of compromises with purity—excuses emphasizing accident or volition, makeshift explanations with which after-lives have been patched together. But Giraudoux wanted to set up another kind of example, and he should be judged for what he tried to do. The qualification of Lucile's whiteness and purity as "goose-like" is reminiscent of J.-P. Sartre's attack on Giraudoux in 1940 *(M. Jean Giraudoux et Aristote);* and the best answer to it that I know was written by Mme. Magny:

> Sartre . . . blâmerait volontiers Giraudoux de nous enchanter par le spectacle d'un . . . univers romanesque qui prend le contrepied exact de l'évolution philosophique et scientifique depuis quatre cent ans. . . . Mais c'est là méconnaître les raisons profondes, à la fois métaphysiques et sociales, du charme esthétique de la préciosité.
>
> La préciosité proteste contre l'impureté de l'existence; elle nous protège contre les choses amorphes et veules, ces objets dont on dirait que nul n'ose être vraiment lui-même et qui tous se croient obligés de se déguiser sous les apparences de ce qui peut leur être le plus opposé.

Because many people are impure, are we to stop protesting against impurity? Are we not even to be reminded that there can be such a thing as absolute purity, such an example as Lucile's? If it is so, we are indeed impoverished.

If *Pour Lucrèce* shows Giraudoux's increasing skill as a dramatist, it is not merely because Lucile is his most successful "essence" character; the setting and construction of the play are also better. Here for the first time he placed his tragic figure in a modern and real, not legendary situation. Fry, in the passage quoted above, translated "la ville" (d'Aix) by "the town," rather than "the city." It was an excellent choice, for he thus escaped suggesting the classic issue of the mythology

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plays, the issue between the central character and "the city," as it existed between Aegisthe and Argos, Judith and Bethulia, Lia and Sodome, Siegfried and the German state. No, Aix-en-Provence may well be called "the town"; its inhabitants are all-too-human; and in its atmosphere we may discern a realism new to Giraudoux, which should make *Pour Lucrèce* very meaningful to a modern audience. The setting is, in fact, so authentically Provençal that doubts are being raised as to the chance of making it clear to a Broadway audience. But the same difficulties were met and overcome in *La Folle de Chaillot* and *Intermezzo,* plays which were in other respects much less realistic.

The "world's events" of *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* proved satisfactory for a modern tragedy because the Trojan War, though prehistoric and mythological, presented the challenges of all wars. *Pour Lucrèce* has even more universality, because it does not have to succeed *in spite of* a mythological plot: its plot is the only one which Giraudoux constructed that does not depend on supernatural forces for its tragic effect. This statement may seem paradoxical, inasmuch as Lucile is said to be endowed with a magical ability to detect infidelity in her fellow citizens. However, if we are considering the impression of reality, the suspension of disbelief that a theatre audience can experience, the paradox becomes clear. There is nothing visible or audible in Lucile's behavior that the audience cannot attribute to intuition; we are asked only to suppose that a character who is the essence of purity can detect impurity in others. Her peculiar trait is so close to possible that one doesn't dismiss it as fantasy, or stretch one's imagination as in the presence of an archangel, a divine foot-soldier, or a "beggar who looks so much like a beggar that he must be a god." Upon reflection, the audience might object that to explain Lucile's strange power the only alternative to supernatural aid would be a good "ear to the ground"—a reasonable assumption in view of the small scale of Aix society—and yet someone with Lucile's attitude simply would not be told the town scandal. Even so, such reflections would occur to one only afterwards; they would not disturb one's sense of reality during the play.

As to construction, the important thing to observe in *Pour Lucrèce* is that its plot moves inevitably, with no impertinent or unjustified suspense, to a tragic conclusion, so that Lucile's death clearly "proves" the validity of her Platonic absolute. An objection raised by many French critics is that, after a strong first act, the play deviates into melodrama. Because the incidents—the sleeping powder administered to Lucile by Paola in order to engineer the imaginary rape, the *coup de sonnette* of the injured husband, the *fiole* of poison—are reminiscent of Battaille and Ohnet, and the rape masquerade perhaps of Grand Guignol, Acts II and III have been called patchwork. What should be considered, however, is the succession of these incidents, the march of events; and if we do this we must admit that the plot has an integral movement, even a certain economy. The right clue for interpreting a

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Giraudoux "debate" play was given by Edouard Bourdet: "un théâtre d'idées, où seules les paroles prononcées ont de l'importance—l'action n'est là que pour les amener." So long as Paola says what is to be said in opposition to Lucile (and this she does, so forcibly that we feel the impetus on each side of the battle between Purity and Paola's Amazonian *"confrérie de femmes"*), what matter if she uses a sleeping powder rather than something more subtle? The duel, in a Second Empire fable, can still be made to objectify human conflict dramatically; and if Lucile's *fiole* does not take effect quite like Emma Bovary's arsenic, will the audience really regret it? Giraudoux may have chosen these appurtenances of Gothic romance to add a touch of ironic humor to the play, like the caricatures in *La Guerre de Troie*. But in any case, we who have been brought up in the Shavian tradition need not ask more of the incidents than that they serve their purpose.

It must be acknowledged that the third act of *Pour Lucrèce* poses some real problems of interpretation. First of all, a problem for the producer: we are told by Professor Inskip in his new book on Giraudoux and Jouvet[4] that M. Barrault had to choose between three versions of Act III, all in Giraudoux's own handwriting but with no clear indication of the author's preference. For the cast and for the audience, there is the problem of interpreting Lucile's suicide. Because it comes directly after the revelation of Paola's hoax, the suicide has been thought the result of this revelation. Marianne Mercier-Campiche, for instance, gives the following account: "Les deux femmes déclarent à Lucile effondrée que le viol n'a pas eu lieu. Lucile-Lucrèce ne se remet pas d'une pareille déception. Elle avale le poison." Professor Leefmans attributes the suicide to Lucile's "loss of faith in her purity," and Robert Bourget-Pailleron suggests as a secondary motive her remorse over the death of Marcellus. Noting this variety of opinion and what he calls the "confusion" of possible interpretations, Professor Inskip concludes that "neither in style, in dramatic strength, nor in characterization can the play be called consistent, and it is a grave defect indeed for a stage creation to end less well than it began."

Yet there is no confusion whatsoever in Professor Inskip's own interpretation of Lucile's suicide: "She kills herself not out of outraged virtue, as the original Lucrece had done, but for shame at the baseness and unworthiness of humanity." We should remember that Giraudoux's Lucrèce is not merely a believer in purity; she is the essence of purity. The essence had been destroyed in Act II, the "word" negated; and thus to destroy herself was only to recognize or verify the fact of her non-existence. And her death defines the Platonic ideal of purity, though, ironically, the verbal definition of it is placed in the mouth of her obtuse husband, who doesn't understand its significance: "Une femme fidèle, c'est celle qu'effleure une main étrangère, et qui déjà n'est plus."

[4] Donald Inskip, *Jean Giraudoux, the Making of a Dramatist*, Oxford University Press (1958), p. 164.

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The characterization of Lucile will seem inconsistent only to those who expect the quarrel between purity and impurity to be patched up by some sort of compromise. But the opposition has not been minimized in this play; Paola's evil was an absolute evil, though it found expression in a half-measure, a kind of practical joke. We should not expect Lucile to counter this evil with half-measures or remonstrances, for an "essence character" does not make jokes about "a tiny bit of adultery" or being "somewhat virginal." Lucile's attack on impurity in Act I was serious; her answer to the "joke" in Act III is both serious and inevitable.

For Lucile, then, life had virtually ended before the hoax was revealed; but for the audience, the dramatic reversals of Act III add considerably to the tragic effect of this "Duel of the Angels." Lucile's pathetic scene of "confession," in which she seemed to be trying to reconcile herself to her husband, comes to be understood as a futile attempt to make his after-life more tolerable. This delayed recognition, followed by Barbette's *tirade* at the end, gives tremendous force to Giraudoux's bitter indictment of men. Finally, the great scene of Paola's supposed triumph, which ends with her contrite acknowledgement, "le monde est pur," is a *peripeteia* in the grand tradition, justifying Lucile's death and leaving the audience with its reassertion of the ideal.

ARTHUR J. KNODEL

Tantric Plunge and Yantric Poem

THE INTEREST OF A NUMBER of so-called symbolist writers in occultism will come as news to no one familiar with the field. The attempt to treat that interest as the very key to symbolism, while not unprecedented, has considerably more novelty. And since occultism is nothing if not eclectic, that attempt may take widely varying forms. Here is how *The Way Down and Out*[1] approaches the matter: "What is the metaphysical foundation of the symbolist movement? . . . the answer is 'occultism' . . ." (p. xxiii). Having argued that important point, the author proceeds to demonstrate that the real significance of symbolist writings is in direct proportion to their success in embodying occult metaphysics. The demonstration is not convincing, for a variety of reasons.

Foremost among them is the fact that *The Way Down and Out* is predicated on a patently false premise. We are told from the outset

[1] THE WAY DOWN AND OUT: THE OCCULT IN SYMBOLIST LITERATURE, by *John Senior*. Cornell University Press. $3.75.

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that "the symbolist view of art is wholly different from—in fact precisely antithetical to—the aesthetic" (p. xxiv) and again, "The symbolists did not think of themselves as writing poems for aesthetic pleasure. They were out to change the quality of the consciousness of men and therefore out to change the world" (p. xxv). Now the symbolist movement was first and foremost a literary movement, and the primary concern of its participants was to produce works that give a maximum of aesthetic pleasure. "Beauty" was their watchword; and—to cite only *chefs de file*—Baudelaire and Mallarmé were obsessed with problems of form and style, and both of them paid fulsome tribute to Théophile Gautier, the high priest of that extreme form of aestheticism known as *l'art pour l'art*. The symbolists certainly *did* think of themselves as writing poems for aesthetic pleasure.

It is true that the more intelligent ones were not content with aestheticism alone, but the aesthetic concern remained paramount for almost all of them. Of the admittedly symbolist writers (I exclude Blake and Hugo, who are placed in a kind of symbolist annex by Mr. Senior) Rimbaud alone violently rejected aesthetic considerations; only to find that, in that case, he had better give up writing poetry. Which he did. I agree that the best symbolist poets, like all poets worthy of the name, were "out to change the quality of the consciousness of men"—but precisely by aesthetic means and with aesthetic pleasure as their immediate goal.

The anti-aesthetic premise helps explain two striking peculiarities of *The Way Down and Out*. I refer, first, to the shift in the *dramatis personae* of symbolism: the author considers Blake, Hugo, Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Huysmans, Villiers, Mallarmé, Yeats, and Eliot. Second, there is the strong impression one gets, on reading several of the essays on the individual authors, that the prince of Denmark has been left out of *Hamlet*.

It should be recalled that only a small group of writers of the mid-eighties and nineties actually applied the term "symbolist" to themselves. It was later critics who extended the term to include such precursors as Nerval, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud, and such followers as Yeats and Eliot. But no one, so far as I know, has ever tried to attach Blake or that *tête de Turc* of almost all the symbolists, Victor Hugo, to the movement. Moreover, many poets that should figure in any serious consideration of symbolism—Corbière, Verlaine, Laforgue, Régnier, the Belgian group—are hardly mentioned, if at all, in *The Way Down and Out*. The author, in his determination to define the symbolist movement exclusively in terms of a problematic occult metaphysics (of which only isolated symbolists were truly aware) omits so much of the total picture that what is left is grossly deformed by resultant errors in perspective. The term "symbolist movement," if it is to retain any valid content at all, must continue to designate—as it has for Symons, Valéry, Edmund Wilson, T. S. Eliot, *et al*—a com-

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munity of sensibility rather than a common metaphysics. It is perfectly obvious that occultism could fit very easily into the pattern of that highly self-absorbed sensibility. But it should be equally obvious that occultism was, in fact, only one of many elements that actually did enter into the expression of the symbolist sensibility.

A refusal to admit that fact leads Mr. Senior to the distressingly lop-sided kind of *Hamlet*-without-the-prince presentation I have mentioned. Reading the essay devoted to Hugo, one would never suspect that Hugo was the author of "L'Expiation" or "La Rose de l'Infante" or a dozen other magnificent pieces that surpass in beauty and poignancy any of the table-tapping pseudo-profundities cited by Mr. Senior. *Sylvie,* not being very occult, is not mentioned, though it is undoubtedly Nerval's masterpiece. Mallarmé's "Après-midi d'un faune" and "Hérodiade" (except for the closing "Cantique")—in fact, almost all the Mallarmé poems except one or two sonnets and "Un Coup de dés . . ."—are hardly mentioned or simply omitted. And Yeats, poor Yeats! All the extraordinary verve and humanity of some of his later work, all his saving wit—one would never suspect their existence on reading Mr. Senior. "Deprived of love, Yeats ends with hate, the only passion accessible to a dying animal" (p. 168). But then, Yeats "uses symbols in his poems, but his poems are not themselves symbolic. That is, they are not koans or yantras" (p. 168).

It may be objected that, after all, the author's concern is only with the occult elements in the symbolist writers and that such omissions as those just discussed are justified. The objection would be valid if the author did not keep reiterating that what makes a piece of symbolist writing valuable is the measure of genuine occultism it involves. As it is, he is duty-bound to show either that the accepted masterpieces (like "La Rose de l'Infante" or "L'Après-midi d'un faune") are actually not masterpieces, or that these works in some way owe something important to occultism. But that is hardly done at all.

It may still be argued that the analyses of the admittedly occult pieces of Blake, Nerval, and the others are of value, in spite of the deficiencies cited. Unfortunately, not even those analyses are very convincing. But before I can justify that assertion, a word must be said about Mr. Senior's presentation of occultism.

Approximately the first fourth of his book is given over to an historical survey of occultism. It is said to be a *philosophia perennis* underlying a continuous and world-wide tradition extending from pre-history into the present. "We can," writes Mr. Senior—who is a great hand at the cautionary term, as my italics seek to indicate—"list a number of attributes so that with *some* fairness we may separate the occult from the rest of human activity *somewhat at least.* Occultists *tend* to believe . . ." (p. 39). And there follows a list of twenty-one attributes, to which we must do violence in the interest of brevity. The list begins by declaring that the universe is monistic; its underlying 'stuff' is spirit,

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usually manifested as light. All things progress by dialectical opposites; yet the opposites are only apparent, since the universe is One and ineffable. Moreover, between the various modes of appearances there exists an inexhaustible pattern of correspondences or analogies. The underlying Oneness is organic and wholly anthropomorphic: "The universe is taken to be, in fact, a living man" (p. 39). In the sexual act man overcomes the play of dialectical opposites by becoming symbolically androgynous "and therefore whole." Sex is thus one of the keys to self-realization, which involves seven different layers of the psyche. Certain supermen (bodhisattvas) "veil the ultimate in terms suitable to time and place" (p. 40). The device by which the underlying Oneness is at least momentarily revealed is a system of correspondences (yantra) such as "ziggurats, pyramids, mysteries, myths, alchemical processes, astrological diagrams" (p. 40) and, of course, certain works of literature and art. The dialectical pattern works itself out in pulses or cycles in which "all souls must eventually be all things. The task of individual man . . . is to leave things as they seem in order to discover the unknown, which is often symbolized as a descent into Hell" (p. 41).

I take Mr. Senior's elaborate list of attributes at face-value, since I am not an adept at the hermetic arts. It is not the list I quarrel with, but rather with the way it is applied or by-passed. Not one of the writers presented—not even Nerval—exemplifies all twenty-one attributes. But nowhere is it made quite clear just how many or just which attributes must be exemplified in order for a writer to be a genuine occultist. This vagueness makes it possible to get such really unlikely candidates as Mallarmé and Eliot into the occultist fold. Add to that vagueness a constant tendency to treat a mere interest in, or curiosity about, occultism as a genuine belief in the theory, and you will have no trouble getting Baudelaire and Rimbaud into the same fold.

Equally distressing is the by-passing of the definition in favor of a procedure of guilt-by-association—or should one say rather "innocence-by-association" in this context?

> Baudelaire was a symbolist and an occultist. [Then one can apparently be a symbolist without being an occultist, even *sans le savoir*? A dangerous admission.] He was a friend of Nerval; he read Swedenborg assiduously and was associated with the Fourierists in the revolution of 1848. Even more . . . Baudelaire not only read Eliphas Lévi, but knew him well enough to collaborate with him—they were joint authors of a piece of yellow journalism called *Les Mystères galans* (p. 88).

Mutatis mutandis, it sounds uncomfortably like the late senator from Wisconsin doing in some hapless State Department employee. Of the writers considered, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Eliot are the worst sufferers from this "associational" approach.

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Finally, the substitution of occultist terminology for the actual words of a writer, or the off-hand assertion that such-and-such a passage is obviously an example of some occultist phenomenon or procedure nowhere mentioned by the writer, is shifty at best. Random examples:

> But the intention of the organization is clear: the book [*Les Fleurs du Mal*] is divided into six sections, each representing a stage of the "vaporization" of the will. The Prologue ("Au lecteur") and the unfinished "Epilogue" interpret the experience in clear alchemical language (p. 98).

Oh so? Then why didn't Baudelaire, who was not reticent about such matters, tell us?

Or, quoting for the *n*th time Mallarmé's passage on "evocative" verse ("Evoquer dans une ombre exprès" etc.), Mr. Senior adds for our enlightenment: "The abolition of Chance is the equivalent of 'Moksha,' or yogic 'release'" (p. 140). And Chance is not even mentioned in the quoted passage.

The final act of the hero of Mallarmé's posthumous *Igitur*—the throw of the dice preceding the hero's lying down in the dark of the family sepulchre—elicits this:

> It is the discovery that atman and brahman are one. And it should not be without significance to remind ourselves that in Indian philosophy the act of creation, the act, that is, which initiates the successive emanations of Brahma—his "days"—is symbolized by a throw of the dice (p. 143).

It should not be without significance, but it probably is. And that gratuitous *rapprochement* is immediately followed by:

> The title as well as spinal phrase of Mallarmé's last poem is "Un Coup de dés n'abolira le hasard." [Not quite. Mallarmé wrote "Un coup de dés *jamais* n'abolira le hasard."] I shall not attempt an exegesis. . . . Suffice it to say that it is an attempt to create fourfold vision; it is a yantra, an attempt to express the simultaneity in time, the identity in space, of many possible forms; and this attempt unites Mallarmé even more strongly in both theory and practice with occult tradition (p. 143).

The poem is far too ambiguous for Mr. Senior to attempt an exegesis, but it is quite clear enough to allow an arbitrary occultist interpretation that is justified by nothing Mallarmé ever declared. Far from ever being united with the occult tradition, Mallarmé remained resolutely agnostic—as did his nearest and dearest disciple, Paul Valéry.

Apparently anything that is not flagrantly and openly anti-occult is liable to occult annexation by Mr. Senior. This convenient but distressing procedure begins on the very first page of text. There we find (p. xi) three quotations—one from Joyce, one from Virginia Woolf,

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one from Faulkner—which crystallize three different moments of insight. (Mr. Senior uses the Joycean term "epiphany.") These epiphanies, for Mr. Senior, make occultists of the three writers. But that is nonsense, for Joyce and Woolf were, and Faulkner is, perfectly aware of occultism, and if they had felt their epiphanies to be occult, they would certainly have let us know. Their presentations of moments of insight must be accepted just as they are; we have no right to force them into a world-view alien to their authors. Obviously these epiphanies were important to the three writers who recorded them; but those writers regarded these experiences as isolated and mysterious. That is why they gave them artistic rather than doctrinaire expression. The occultist generalizes (or more often, judging by the occult systems I have come across, gratuitously extrapolates) on the basis of such experiences. He deduces a world-view, a metaphysics, from them. Blake did this; the later Hugo did this. And they are occultists. Though it should be pointed out that when they were their most occult, they were often least successful as poets.

This "pan-occultization" vitiates the very heart of Mr. Senior's book, which is the thesis that all the writers discussed represent a "descent into Hell." That is the only way "out", the only salvation open to us in the twentieth century; the way up, through charity and self-denial, being, for some unexplained reason, not feasible at the present time. But exactly what is this Way Down? —

> . . . To discover the highest form of Self, we must live through the lowest first—Hell is a necessary condition of Heaven.
>
> Some Hindu schools have developed this aspect of Indian philosophy into libertinism. If all things are one and if recognition of all things as one's self is the necessary condition of release, it follows, according to these schools, that all possible experience, even perverse experience, must be included as a form of love in the soul's education. What moralists call sin is actually a way to salvation. This aspect of occultism rather than asceticism has had the widest influence on romantic and symbolist literature (p. 17).

We have heard all this before. The greatest sinner is the greatest saint. Left in that unqualified form, the doctrine is an invitation to moral chaos. Mr. Senior does give it a somewhat more plausible form, but even his "tantric" explanations do not make it very palatable. Be that as it may, we must agree with Mr. Senior that all the writers he discusses did indeed go through agonizing crises. But the important point is that these crises were not necessarily occult in nature, or even when they were, did not necessarily take the form of the desperate embracing of the lower self. Of the writers in question, only Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Huysmans show real evidence of having cultivated vice in an effort to exhaust it and reach some sort of purity beyond. But of those three, neither Baudelaire nor Rimbaud was ever truly an occult-

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ist, and the last and most important "vice" that Huysmans threw off was precisely occultism itself, to arrive, as everyone knows, in the arms of the Church. (Parenthetically, Huysmans' "occult" dealings with the Abbé Boullan are of so stupid and loathsome a character that they are enough to turn one away from occultism *and* Huysmans forever.) In the case of the true occultists such as Blake, Nerval, and the later Hugo: while their crises involved acute suffering—and to that extent may be described as a descent into Hell—it is still difficult to understand what their crises (all three so different, moreover) have in common with the tantric plunge into the destructive element.

But then, it becomes increasingly clear as one approaches the end of *The Way Down and Out* that its author's chief concern is not symbolist literature or even the occult aspects of some of it. Occultism itself is his chief interest. Indeed, in the postscript entitled "Epilogue: The Destructive Element" the author expresses the belief that occultism may be our best hope—if, indeed, there is any at all—in the face of our mid-twentieth-century woes. In view of what I have already said about his book, it will come as no surprise that I cannot share Mr. Senior's belief.

In fact, I came away from the book with the depressing feeling of having witnessed something very close to intellectual bankruptcy. How else can one react in the face of such far-from-isolated passages as the following? —

> [Mr. Senior is explicating T. S. Eliot's verse:] "Garlic and sapphires in the mud/Clot the bedded axle-tree." We should find this meaningless except for the image of the wheel suggested by the axle. The garlic and the sapphires are the opposites, mixed in the mud of this world, which whirl on the samsaric wheel. Garlic and sapphires—the stench and the glitter; the one nourishes, the other dazzles. Or perhaps the lines do not mean this at all. These are only hints and guesses. A precise idea of the image is perhaps not possible, and perhaps poets should not write this way (p. 188).

No one, even occultists, should write *that* way. No "perhaps" about it.

When the author is summarizing information, his prose manages to be fairly clear and straightforward. That prose, however, is not enhanced by such terms as "Eliotic," "Longfellowonian," and "résuméed." And somebody should long ago have told Mr. Senior that *arriviste* does not mean a new arrival in the big city; that the expression is *embarras de richesses* and not *excès de richesse*, and that "cohort" is not a synonym of "confederate" or "associate" but the word for a tenth of a legion—i.e., five to six hundred men.

Finally, one mechanical defect can scarcely be overlooked, because it begins on the first page of the first chapter and continues throughout the book: the typographical errors in the quoted French texts are so numerous as to be disconcerting.

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BENJAMIN DE MOTT

Monge and Other Destinations

A TOUCHING, WITTY, MUCH-UNDERVALUED Australian writer named Martin Boyd begins one of his recent books with a paragraph comparing the mind to the push-button electric maps found at the entrance of Métro stations in Paris. The key to the likeness is that both maps and minds are "full of unilluminated directions," and the key to the difference is that thumbs that press map buttons make fewer mistakes than agents that light the mind. There are people who pass through life, Boyd observes, "with no light ever shining along the unused tracts of [their] minds;" there are others whose stupidity, environment, parents or friends cause them "to press the wrong button, so that instead of reaching stations of which the names glow with history and devotion, Sèvres, Babylone, Cluny, Strasbourg St. Denis, [they] arrive only at Monge." And in the infrequent case when the right button has been pushed, the likelihood is strong that this happened not by choice but by accident: "a line of poetry or a glimpse through a doorway" has shown the man where he longs to go.

The voice that speaks these last phrases is indeed a voice from down under, interred by time; it speaks from an age when there were not only doors that were made of wood instead of glass, but longings that were brought to poetry instead of to Reichians on State Street. But when this is granted, and when the claims of a line of poetry are set aside in favor of those of a box of novels,[1] the reminder that writing and revelation once went together keeps an edge of interest. The novel did begin, after all, by offering glimpses through doorways; it has shown races and nations where they wanted to go (elegant social worlds) and who they wished to be (someone as poised, grave, sympathetic, wise, or funny as the narrator of the National Favorite). And although the addict himself, to allow him a word, has lost enthusiasm for Dutch interiors, he has not quite lost faith in the possibility of a new showing-forth. The sense that present life misses being tolerable by better than a hair, the notion that somewhere on the map is a town where the wits, imagination, and body thrive, the suspicion that the need to strengthen

[1] THE MANSION, by *William Faulkner*. Random House. $4.75. INVITATION TO A BEHEADING, by *Vladimir Nabokov*. Putnam. $3.95. THE CAVE, by *Robert Penn Warren*. Random House. $4.95. PURSUIT OF THE PRODIGAL, by *Louis Auchincloss*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75. MEN DIE, by *H. L. Humes*. Random House. $3.50. BEST SHORT STORIES FROM THE PARIS REVIEW. Dutton, $4.00. THE NAKED LUNCH, by *William Burroughs*. Olympia Press. No price given. SATURDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING, by *Alan Sillitoe*. Knopf. $3.75. HALF MOON HAVEN, by *Martin Russ*. Rinehart. $3.00. A DAY IN SPRING, by *Ciril Kosmač*. British Book Centre. $3.75. The novel of Boyd that is quoted is OUTBREAK OF LOVE, Reynal (1957).

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the will in face of a fool's condescension may well (for all anybody knows) survive appointment even to the Tenure Staff—these agents stimulate dreamy visions of Wholeness which, differing in kind and intensity from the novel reader's older fantasies, are nevertheless similar to the latter in claiming that books can validate them.

Faulkner does more than most writers to encourage visions of the sort specified. His position as an authority on The Ideal—resurrection, endurance, and the like—has been smutched a trifle lately by his habit of advising interviewers to try living in stews. And he has never succeeded in inventing a plausible location or mode of expression for any reasonably sophisticated intelligence. But it has always been clear that the best of his writing does satisfy an entirely definable longing, that for a world which is more real than the one at hand. Some say the center of his achievement in this line is the creation of heat and dust, a particular landscape where nature counts as it does not count elsewhere. But there is more to it than that. Besides inventing the weather, Faulkner invented Work and the Well-Worn Thing, and both items have potent influence on the visionary. The merciless sun of Yoknapatawpha falls on eroded hoe handles, crumpled saucepans and porch steps, faded denim shirts, and other hard-pastoral objects that tickle the nostalgia of the glossy trade-in world. Used every day, these objects —unlike your handy Kozak dry-wash rag—are not put back after use into your handy plasticized container, and their value is measured—as value is measured nowhere else—directly in relation to work. Probably no writer since Defoe has focussed such intense interest on labor, posthole digging or log planing, as Faulkner has done, and an effect of this focus has been the restoration of the joy of provisioning to the world. For the saver of green stamps (they do not give them at Varner's), for the guilty desk-bound loafer north and south, the hewer of wood now whispering into his Dictet, the carrier of water now dipping for paper clips, an inkling of this joy is the beginning of conversion to the ancient belief in physicality.

The Mansion offers more such inklings than *The Town* (the middle volume of what Faulkner regards as the Snopes trilogy), but fewer than *The Hamlet*. The main provisioner of the book is Mink Snopes, a figure of stunning simplicity who digs postholes night and day, breaks rock in jail for decades, carpenters for a U. S. Marine turned evangelist, hoes cornfields, picks cotton for a Negro family, eats splendidly abrasive meals, hitchhikes across Mississippi rediscovering the world after his prison term, repairs a broken pistol, says "Hidy" to people met on the road, arranges "furnish" with Varner, and engages in a dozen other activities that are created in pages superlatively dense with sensation. In art as in life, though, there is not enough Mink to go around, and in *The Mansion* there are no acceptable substitutes. The substitutes offered are A Trip to New York, a painfully abstract love affair between Gavin Stephens and Eula Varner's daughter, and cer-

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tain new matter for essayists on oasis and stasis, time and southwestern man, and other Faulknerian themes; none of these offerings suffices to prevent the real world from sliding out of sight.

As it disappears, the reader who had come looking for Wholeness begins to grasp more clearly the causes of his disappointment. Chief of them—and especially striking in the New York chapters of the book—is that Faulkner cannot envisage any permanent role for that not inconsequential part of the Whole Man, the mind. If anyone in Yoknapatawpha is bright, Ratliff is the man, and Ratliff is the visitor to New York, and Ratliff's intelligence cuts off with an audible click the moment he enters Metropolis. He sups in Grinnich Village, hears about "21" and the Stork, shops at Bronzini or Countess Mara, without once making a decent joke, and the implication—which satisfies no longing whatever—is that intelligence does not transport. The whole body of Faulkner's work seems to prepare for an encounter of reality with unreality, and certainly a meeting of modern man with a Man from Marse's warm, warm ground could not have been more *seeingly* described than in Ratliff's unique comic manner—but for some reason, perhaps the author's fear of hickism, Ratliff's manner does not survive the city. However, in criticism people always ask too much. Faulkner has twenty-four books behind him, most of which have succeeded in further confusing the relations between art and the idea of proportion; his posthole diggers, flood-riders, and blare-eyed, bridge-banging studs have been therapists to a generation of forced Berkeleyans, showing them that experience can be relished at no risk save the loss of mind; and the principle of health that he has bodied forth out of chaos for thirty-five years is literally beyond price and value.

To qualify for such praise Vladimir Nabokov needs more than the purifying ministrations of Professor Trilling or those other sages who even now are seated at the board, sorting good books from bad for busy people like ourselves. And if the need for purification were somehow met, most readers would still hesitate to rest praise of Nabokov heavily on appreciation of his "sense of reality." Those who commend *Lolita* for truthfulness to the superhighway, the great boil that is drawing off infection (as someone said) from The Land, miss the fact that the book's details are less like arrows sent out to pin down the world than poisoned darts of self-laceration. And, if that fact is too figurative, it does gain weight when considered in relation to such a work as *Invitation to a Beheading,* which centers mainly on the tormented self. The Russian original of this tale of a "condemned" man was written twenty-five years ago, or long before most of the writing (except Zamiatin's *We* and of course Kafka) that it puts the reader in mind of—Orwell, Milosz, Nigel Dennis, Riesman, and others. And history has thickened its texture by confirming its prophecies. But the book *is*

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abstract in conception: it asks to be read as an allegory, and, although the method is what is called surrealistic, the aim throughout is to express an idea rather than a sensation.

The idea, coarsely stated, runs as follows. At a moment when "others" are losing personal substance, turning out their lives to the world, the man who by accident or desire retains wholeness of being—this once more—will for a time seem either mad or powerless, incapable of defending himself against oppressors who wish him to become like themselves. If he remembers, however, that the others can only wish for this, can only as it were *invite* him to the beheading of his nature, he can regain a measure of freedom and perhaps even begin a search for beings akin to him. The idea is well fleshed in metaphor. A figure named Cincinnatus is the *cheval entier* of the piece, and he differs from the others because he is opaque not transparent, healthy not crippled. The incoherent self-definition Cincinnatus enters in his prison journal makes explicit his sense of his difference: "I am not an ordinary—I am the one among you who is alive—Not only are my eyes different, and my hearing, and my sense of taste—not only is my sense of smell like a deer's, my sense of touch like a bat's—but, most important, I have the capacity to conjoin all this in one point . . . ." And the book's claim to respect as a work which, despite abstractness, offers a glimpse through a doorway, a strengthening vision, depends as much on the psychological freshness of its evocation of "the sense of difference," as on the conviction with which it bids the reader to rename his paranoia as strength.

The possibility remains, to be sure, that by another name paranoia remains the same. The notion that only I myself am unconfused, that only I speak truth, understand the body, love art, fathom the natural world—it is too entrancing, too exhilarating: back of this doorway (in some circumstances) stand Napoleons who cannot tell the difference between the tombs of St. Denis and a coke machine. But abroad there are other circumstances (Nabokov knew them, as goes without saying), and at home there are moments when the man who lacks the capacity for seeing the world as Lilliput and himself as Gulliver is likely to be led to some block. The announcement of this truth in *Invitation to a Beheading* is wry, hedged with obliquities, unlikely to lead even the most desperate longing for wholeness on to fantasies of empire; but it is strong enough withal to provide comfort, and comfort is an item that nowadays only the transparent affect to despise.

As the foregoing indicates, the language of wholeness rather tends to drip clichés, but it cannot yet be abandoned. Friendly reviewers of R. P. Warren's new book have regarded its story, an episode that recalls Floyd Collins and Richard Widmark in the cave, as a mere device to bring half-men into view at the moment of their entrance into the vale of whole-soulmaking. It should be said at once that the reader's view of the half-men is not unimpeded. The impediments include the

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manipulative dexterity of the narrative, which draws excessive attention to itself, and the noise of the symbols, which repeatedly distracts the eye. To say that a symbol "ought to" grow out of the life of a story, instead of shouting meanings at its first appearance, is probably to make rules where none can be made; but regardless of rules and probabilities, the symbols of *The Cave* do shout at the reader, and since no reason emerges for defining them in the special terms of the book itself, they mean, in the end, with little more intensity than the J. Press benchmark, or the Guatemalan flag.

These objections are serious, but there is another—to the texture of Warren's prose—that is not less so. In time this objection will be stated by an Expert, a Responsible Analyst who does not flinch at the word Stylistics and never lets a Problem drop with the kind of vulgarism that satisfies the ordinary reader—as, that Warren loads every riff with gore. But at the moment mere reviewing can suggest a few classifications drawn from the language of *The Cave* that later investigators will perhaps find of use in working up descriptive accounts of The New Southern Rhetoric. First: *The Cole Porter Adjectival Sequence* ("that glittering, jittering, remorseless whir," "that distant, pervasive, persuasive sound"). Second: *The Bombed Article* ("rock snagging above woods-growth," "a long dive into beech-gloom"). Third: *The Juiced-Up Hyphen,* a cousin of the *Bombed Article* ("in a split-bottom chair, in the grape-purple shade," "so dew-bright and sweet-smelling"). Fourth: *The Alliterative or Rhyming Rimshot,* a cousin of both the *Bombed Article* and the *J.-U. Hyphen* ("Old Jack Harrick, the cancer-bit heller and beauty-boy of the wheel chair," "Old Jack Harrick, old heller of high coves and hoot-owl hollows," "and her breath, sweet-smelling enough, and her body, you get her stripped down, and the light gentle, shaped all ripe and ready for hand-holt," "he was ashamed, plain puke-ashamed," "damned from hell to bell time," "two whoops and a hog-holler").

Taken separately these forms are unworthy of ré-mark, but, as Stylistics the great hypostatizer tends to conceal, they are usually found together—in such passages as this:

> The word finally got to him how Ole Mac Sumpter, his old Hell-hopping side-kick turned Bible-beater had married Tillie Tilyard. . . . . Was it his fault that that Tillie Tilyard, that night when the dogwood was spook-pale, had sort of had a strut bust in her?

The sound can perhaps be described impressionistically as Phil Napoleon Dixie, and, although lively, it has harmful effects. Besides focussing the reader's attention on rhythm rather than on sense, the features of Warren's language damage the characterization—there are moments, in fact, when characters seem no more than the old rhythm section in new quotation marks. The passages quoted above are spoken by the narrator; the following is a scrap of dialogue:

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"Look at them Christmas bubbies that-air little Jo-Lea is stringing on herself. Mammy, rock me to sleep."

Authentically backwoods in derivation, such remarks as these nevertheless bear too obviously the stomp of the narrator, and cannot be regarded as independent observations.

With these obstacles in mind—obstacles, that is, to perception of the meanings that lie beyond the doorway of the cave—it is actually not feasible to inquire whether Warren brings his characters, and his reader, through to wholeness—or lets them off at Cluny or another stop. Neither is it feasible at this moment to debate the assertion (made by a recent writer in a journal called *ELH*) that Warren is the most Shakespearean of modern novelists. The notion occurs that *Swinburnian* would be a more exact critical term in this context, but the one genuinely practical point of summary is simply a warning: some readers of *The Cave* may rise from it with a twitch.

When compared with Warren, Louis Auchincloss seems as smooth as the roadbed of the Twentieth Century, but unfortunately he takes his reader to Monge. This term needs definition, of course; it is to be understood both as a setting in which the imagination does not thrive because chilled by convention, and as the "new" setting which appears after A Conformist throws off convention. To amplify: in *Pursuit of the Prodigal* Monge is the situation at the Ancestral Manor in Southampton (to which the young sons return after Grottlesex and Harvard) and at the Old Family Law Firm in New York; it is also the situation that follows the hero's revolt—which is to say, it is a Reno divorce, a change of job (out of the Family Firm into a partnership with A Questionable Jew), and a dry affair with an editor of *Vogue*. Amplification is appropriate only because in the first sixty pages of his book Auchincloss seemed about to bring off an extraordinary stunt, that of setting a brute—not a comedian, or a mere British Decent, but a thoroughly nasty man—down in the dull unsuspecting world just described. At this stage of matters it seemed possible that Arthur Mizener, who describes Auchincloss as "one of our very best young novelists," was not merely torturing himself with the hope that another artist interested in rich people was about to appear, but was instead responding to a striking development in Auchincloss's talent. But the stage proved to be a stage: the nasty hero dwindles into a stereotype (The Ethical Lawyer), and Auchincloss remains what he was—a writer close to the dead center of American novelistic competence. Like Cheever among others he is precise in his awareness of the location of those who presently long to go elsewhere and see visions, but unlike Cheever he does not finally possess the gift of intensifying dissatisfaction.

Once arrived in Monge, in the killing familiar world, the traveller has for a moment the illusion that all roads lead there. And although they do not, it is true that a writer can arrive in the place simply by deciding too willfully to avoid it. H. L. Humes, for example, who

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showed impressive narrative power in his first novel, proves in his second that an ammunition dump on a Caribbean atoll, if created exclusively for symbolic purposes, can be in itself a fair equivalent of meaninglessness. The dump in question explodes in Chapter I killing the naval officer in command, and the debris includes a half dozen "interchapters" of rather hiccoughy stream of consciousness (its source is the officer's wife) that explores conjugal relations in a method that asks to be called conjugational:

Oh why good God why *Our Father*
non decorum est *who art in*
all lies to makes us shamed of loving *(sic)*
Grief good God good grief *in*
grief relief relife *love love*
relife relive relove oh love love love
relust reluct

This is not to say that *Men Die* has no power to excite. Humes is first rate, though possibly indebted to William Golding, when he writes about the Garden of Nothing-Doing, "a group of tombstone-like rocks on a flat acre" where some sailors occupy midnight hours sculpting (with a jackhammer by gaslight) forms projected by their imaginations—crude naked women, a fire hydrant, an enormous head called Laughing Boy. But he runs on from here into sexual fantasies that lack the Garden's flaring eerie life.

To speak of the later, sexual fantasy, is to specify what is, in the age of sexual emancipation, the most familiar of all roads to blankness. Some writers who travel this road do so in the interest of confronting "the basic anxieties of our time," as dustjackets say, but such confrontations are usually mere exhibitions of wishfulness. (In *Men Die* a junior grade lieutenant accompanies a beautiful young widow from her husband's funeral to her hotel room. They are strangers but they exchange one or two words and then as the junior grade lieutenant sits in the chair, the young widow abstractedly strips down to a black slip in front of him. The basic anxiety here would seem to be worry that in the age of sexual emancipation stranger-ladies won't strip quick like stranger-ladies should, and the scene arouses only a smile.) In other writers the desire is not to know *angst* but to convey information. Indeed it is an error to believe that sexual emancipation is responsible for drabness only in the degree to which it encourages fantasy; the new-old freedom has that effect in equal part because it has added (at a time when the novel is already sluggish with fact) a new range of subjects about which the writer feels obliged to be knowledgeable—abortion, birth control, miscarriages, and others. Philip Roth (whose well-regarded story, "The Conversion of the Jews," is the glossiest item in the just-issued collection of *Paris Review* fiction) built up an entire novella on the problem: Will Mama find the diaphragm? Not an inter-

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esting problem when adumbrated by Mary McCarthy, little better now, it nevertheless put a demand for consideration that fiction in its role of informer, spy of particulars, had not the courage to deny. A similar demand is put by the problem: What Exactly Do Pederasts Do? And as a result a series of open-form pornographers like William Burroughs, author of *The Naked Lunch,* are now forcing themselves, not quite in the spirit of Fielding studying cutpurses, to deal with this subject as a subject, perhaps with a waste of imaginative gift. Or yet again, the problem: How To Bring Off A Miscarriage. Alan Sillitoe, the provincial Englishman whose story of the revels of factory workers, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning,* is at moments a work of uncommon authority, interrupts his tale to solve this problem, thereby satisfying those readers whose concern, when it comes to travel, is mainly to stay on the bus past the hospital stop.

Other roads to blankness exist, of course, but so do other destinations, and the relatively unsung travellers who have found them deserve more than a passing word. They are, just at present, a fifty year old Slovene director of films, and a twenty-eight year old American with a best-seller already behind him. Martin Russ, whose diary of the Korean War was an admirable book of its kind, distinguished by odd combinations of objectivity, self-importance, intensity, and naiveté, now publishes a first novel called *Half Moon Haven,* which tells about a young man who works for a time in a home for retarded "children." The book is not exciting or tightly made or brilliantly written, and the writer makes his way out of apparent inconsequence at the end by a too easy contrast of villainy and decency met in the world. But there is a fresh voice speaking in it that is easy, sane, and blessed with a firm, distancing humor. The voice is heard to advantage in a series of quiet but not uncommitted descriptions of violent disciplinarians, and also in the sketches that introduce such inmates of Half Moon Haven as Claude Beasley, a thirty-seven year old crippled "child" whose possessions are a "store-bought corncob pipe, a packet of state tobacco (packed by the inmates of Saugatuck State Prison), and a grimy tattered card" of his dead father on which is printed " 'R. W. Beasley is your New York Central conductor.' " The writer is worried by his own gentleness, but he is not afraid of it, and this light of his nature nearly succeeds in transforming the hellish place he describes into a haven of a kind after all.

The self-consciousness and possibly excessive feeling for the pathetic that mar Russ's book also slightly disfigure Ciril Kosmač's *A Day in Spring,* which is about a Slovene's return after the second war to a village of the Slovene Littoral which Italian Fascists had forced him to leave in the thirties. The writer asks too often whether he is improving matters unjustifiably, altering the facts of village life or making myths, and he has other faults as well. The book is badly organized: there is hardly any forward motion in it, and no visible principle in

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its linkage of remembrances. It is also at some moments a shade too diagrammatic in establishing the repetitiousness of history: the heroine, an illegitimate daughter of a peasant woman and a Czech cadet, loses her father in the first world war because he is an enemy of the Slovenes, and then in the second war, in circumstances nearly the same, she loses her Italian fiancé, because *he* is an enemy of the Slovenes. And the voice of the narrator is on occasion discomfortingly shrill. (As for the translation, it runs heavily to archaisms of the period Would Fain Be.) But when these complaints are registered, a good deal remains to be praised—births and deaths, walks and wakes, innocence, experience, scenes of family life, conversations of mowers, a morning in a village school, moments of vibrant Dostoievskianism (an opportunistic police officer, who confiscates livestock for the enemies of the Slovenes and is doomed to be beaten insane by Fascists, thunders at night into a farmhouse kitchen wailing drunkenly in self-pity for his cowardice), and partisans and prisoners of war and wretched neutrals no one of whom is like the next. Beyond these things, a sense of the natural world as simultaneously destructible and indestructible, a relatively untormented belief in reasonable ambitions and self-sacrificing affections, and finally a wholly engaged narrator who, if ostentatiously fearful of sentiment, nevertheless risks an attempt to express joy.

The inevitable question arises: Is this world too distant to count? Because the question bears heavily on that issue of the relations of fiction and vision and wholeness that was lodged a while ago, it begs for a pompous answer—but let the beggar be gone. The narrator himself insisted on the chance that his world might be an invention, and as an invention it would be of course as distant from the Littoral as "real" Monge, or Holyoke, or Slough is from the true. Distance in these matters is, in point of fact, irrelevant—or at least no more relevant than it is, say, in the case of a man hunting the Right Destination for his soul: that character with longings at the map button who would go where fortune said. Reintroducing the latter figure is no mere trick of finale; his terms are, as it happens, the best terms of praise available. For near or far, dream or riddle, *A Day in Spring* does indeed glow with history and devotion, asks to be called a Light, and may well stand for more than a season as a guide to one open doorway through which lucky hearts can still long to go.

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

In Joyce's Wake

BLESSED IS THE BIOGRAPHER whose subject loved particulars. James Joyce had, as he said himself, the mind of a grocer's assistant. More remarkably, almost all the people with whom he associated were blessed, or afflicted, with a scrupulous eye for detail and the gift of total recall. Richard Ellmann has sifted through the appalling mass of fact which results from this confluence of glittering memories, has poised, proportioned, and compressed his materials; and so written, in xvi + 842 pages, the best literary biography of our time.[1] Nobody who is interested in Joyce or the novel or the literature of the twentieth century can afford to remain ignorant of it; at $12.50, it represents the best two-weeks' entertainment on the current market.

Mr. Ellmann's book is happily devoid of polemic, of literary flourishes, of speculative fancies; it has been constructed, indeed, with a positively nineteenth-century respect for fact. There is a breed of biographer, perhaps too a sort of biographical subject, in whom this approach leads directly to the rent-receipt and the laundry-list, and goes no further. But Joyce's life was more intimately bound up with his writings than even those who were ready to recognize the fact have yet recognized; and Mr. Ellmann is adroit at keeping the novels in view while discussing the man. The innumerable facts with which his pages bristle are never allowed to become mere parades of particulars; they move toward the illumination of a mind, a character, an art. They move with planetary steadiness, they are never twisted or tugged to make a special point. And yet, like a planet, they glow, they illumine.

Naturally, not all parts of the story which emerges are of equal interest. There is no doubt that the early section of the Joyce saga is that which most fascinated Mr. Ellmann, and will most intrigue his readers. Between the wars, under the influence of adulation and publicity, and perhaps as a result of a certain original stiffness of character, Joyce seems to have hardened into a thoroughly disagreeable old person. Like Ibsen, he became cranky, self-important, superstitious, and impossibly demanding; his endless quarrels were tiresome, and many of his enthusiasms palpably silly. But the years in Dublin, spent in his appalling father's appalling household, and the first years of exile in Pola, Trieste, Rome, and Zurich, have the excitement of high drama. Two or three years ago, when the *Letters of James Joyce* were published, under the editorship of Stuart Gilbert, the question was widely voiced, Where is the literary consciousness of Joyce? The letters, mostly from the 'twenties and the 'thirties, showed Joyce conniving at

[1] JAMES JOYCE, by *Richard Ellmann*. Oxford University Press. $12.50.

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a cult, worrying about reviews, sales, royalties, interviewers, and his family; but of the literary sensibility which produced *Ulysses* there was not much evidence. In Mr. Ellmann's biography we find the first full, if necessarily generalized, account of Joyce's early spiritual development. When the last details are spelt out, in an edition of the additional letters which Mr. Ellmann is now preparing, the story will be before us in its full depth and complexity. (I don't imply that the present volume has not been based on full manuscript materials; quite the contrary. Still, the letters and journals of that early period will bring us closer to the unfolding mind of Joyce than even the best literary biography of our time.)

What impresses one most about the literary development of James Joyce is the detachment with which, from the beginning, he was able to regard other people. He was a cheerful, well-mannered little boy, known to family and neighbors as "Sunny Jim." Yet he was also capable, at a prodigiously early age, of taking a cold and merciless perspective on the incidents and individuals who made up his life. This was not altogether an individual quality, peculiar to James Joyce. His brother Stanislaus was also accustomed to standing in grave and inflexible judgment over the world and himself. In that extraordinary family which paired so evenly the spirit of Jiggs and Maggie with that of Dostoyevsky, two at least of the brothers passed daily doom-judgment upon their family and their life, as if they themselves were creatures from a different planet. Honesty was their touchstone; they assigned friends, family and contemporaries to various levels in the inferno of charlatanism with all the weighty, imperious assurance of Dante himself. Yet to the superficial eye, they can only have seemed clever, idle young Irishmen, of eighteen or twenty.

Arrogant as he was in denouncing the "charlatanism" of others, James Joyce was curiously tolerant of a broad streak of irrationality and posturing in his own character. As Ellmann traces the career, we see this develop from the laudable conviction of a peculiar destiny to an unhappy *idée fixe* about "treachery" in his friends, and finally into a set of truly pathetic hallucinations. In the novels themselves, there is a striking contrast between Joyce's meticulous care over street-addresses, tramline routes, and cab stand locations, and his use of intellectual materials selected purely to impress. The hermetic theories which are the object of considerable derision when put forward by the hermetic society or AE, become structural principles of the book in which they are derided. Esthetic principles which derive in a commonplace, not to say humble, way from Oscar Wilde are invested with pseudo-Thomist anti-glamour, in order to ring more impressively in the mouth of Stephen Dedalus. And an interesting speculation in the psychology of Shakespeare is laced with unnecessary sentimental trash from the pen of Frank Harris—for no other reason that one can see, than sensationalism.

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Observations like these might serve as grounds to dismiss from serious consideration a scholar or a formal philosopher; about their effect on the texture of Joyce's fiction I have a shrewd opinion which is worth nothing till it can be substantiated in detail; but there can be no doubt that they add enormously to the interest and attractiveness of Joyce as a biographical subject. Such a terrifying and unpredictable mixture of the supremely silly and the supremely perceptive we are not likely to see again, even when the biography of Ezra Pound comes to be written. The plain circumstance would seem to be, that after losing the great architectural structure of Roman Catholicism, Joyce's wonderfully agile and intuitive mind never again found an intellectual structure of any dimensions which demanded his respect and disciplined his sense of belief.

If there is a point of protest to be made against Mr. Ellmann's biography, it is that he allows Joyce's domestic instincts and interests to overflow unduly some of these asperities and negations. For instance, in *Ulysses,* the domestic instincts of the Blooms are very important to the novel; but it will scarcely do to suggest that Bloom's masculinity, roused mysteriously by contact with his spiritual son and exemplified in his request for breakfast in bed, will henceforth be adequate to hold together his disintegrated family. Mr. Ellmann does not go this far, but he does lay a pretty heavy emphasis on domesticity as the heart of the novel. For instance, he suggests that Molly's promiscuity has been much exaggerated; and that many of the twenty-five lovers who are listed on page 716 of *Ulysses* are there on grounds other than sexual connection. "She has confessed to the [two] priests, consulted the gynecologist, and coquetted with the rest," says Mr. Ellmann; in his view she has had only two lovers since her marriage, Bartell D'Arcy and Boylan. This, however, is not what Joyce says. What he provides is a list of the occupants of Molly Bloom's bed; and what we see of her performance with Lenehan, the night of the Glencree dinner in 1894, does not suggest that she is likely to have been content with "coquetry" in the decade that followed. At the end of the novel, her tour to Belfast with Boylan is as definite as it was in the beginning; the limitation of fertility described on pages 720 and 721 has not come to an end, nor is there any sign that it will. If domestic life is indeed at the heart of *Ulysses,* it is a pretty cankered and worm-eaten heart.

In a word, I have a reservation or two about the extent to which Mr. Ellmann allows Joyce's family-feeling to fill the empty, reverberant structures of his novels. If they are to be filled with anything, it will no doubt have to be with domesticity. But the terrible emptiness which comprised Joyce's last days, the gloomy vacancy which drove Nora to beg friends into the house in the hope of making Joyce talk, do not suggest that Mr. Dooley's domesticity sufficed to fill life very full. I should be sorry if it sufficed to fill the novels either; and I should think a point of view equally defensible which proposed *Ulysses* as a

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romance of the second-best. Having lost his real, delightful, terrible father, Stephen settles for a spiritual father, the shambling Bloom; having lost his real religion, Roman Catholicism, he settles for a religion of man, centered on Hiesos Kristos, magician of the beautiful. Bloom, having lost Molly, settles for onanism and Martha; Molly, having lost Bloom, settles for Boylan or any other handy stallion. There is nothing very exhilarating about any of this—nor, for that matter anything unusually depressing (except by exterior standards). It is just mankind mudding around in its usual pointless cyclical patterns. From one aspect, the performance is grotesquely comic, from another grotesquely disgusting. It seems to bear out a bleak observation of Ibsen's, that man, having exhausted all the other parts available for his playing, must now blunder about exercising his native bent for naive comedy, while civilization founders beneath him. From Bloom, Molly and Stephen to the agonized, pointless foolery of Vladimir and Estragon, the road may be shorter and more direct than we like to think.

But Mr. Ellmann may well be honoured for his efforts to avoid so dour a conclusion; and the plain fact is that, whatever opinions we hold about Joyce in the future, whether they agree with Mr. Ellmann's judgments or not, will have to be based on his book. One cannot doubt that the effect of his biography will be to raise the level of literary discussion regarding Joyce to the level which is accepted and expected in discussions of Ibsen, Flaubert, or any other great but fallible man. The cultists, both the esoteric and the sniggering breed, have had their day; now we are equipped to look at Joyce steadily and look at him whole.

Another volume, the fruit of Mr. Ellmann's spare-time cooperation with Mr. Ellsworth Mason, has recently appeared; it is an edition of *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*.[2] These make rather a larger book than one would expect—nor does the project altogether represent a work of piety. To be sure, Joyce's criticism is largely work done with the left hand, and youthful work at that. Aside from having no talent for it, Joyce steered clear of the business of literary log-rolling on principle. As soon as he could possibly afford to do so, he gave up the business of writing articles and reviews, and gave it up for good. But he had the naturally incisive vision and the shrewd gift of phrasing which make one sort of good critic; and, in short, one is no less surprised by the quality than by the quantity of what he turned out. Most of the books he was asked to review fall beneath the level of a contempt which young Joyce did not bother to conceal. Even when the book in question was bearable, he tended to view it with the glancing and indirect eye of one whose main interest was in his own literary

[2] THE CRITICAL WRITINGS OF JAMES JOYCE, edited by *Ellsworth Mason* and *Richard Ellmann*. Viking. $5.00.

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destiny. Hence his work is more interesting from a biographical than from a strictly literary point of view. One can see how his characteristic preoccupations and attitudes began early to shape his critical judgments, and to clear the way for that major surgery which he was to perform on the English novel. The piece on "Drama and Life" and that on James Clarence Mangan have an interest of their own, which is severely intellectual as well as stylistic. The poems ("Gas from a Burner" and "The Holy Office"), because they were written in anger, have a metallic clarity into which a whole attitude is brilliantly compressed. The pieces on Ireland, done for the *Piccolo della Sera,* illustrate unfamiliar aspects of Joyce's mind. One is surprised that his account of Ireland, composed for foreign ears, echoes so closely the blowhard patriotism of the Citizen in Barney Kiernan's, and that his political views parallel, to the point of paraphrase, those of Arthur Griffiths. Equally full of insights and outcroppings is the lecture on Blake, delivered in Trieste; a thoroughly regrettable permissions mix-up has led to the omission of the companion lecture on Defoe. But this is the chief vacancy; and, in general, it is good to have these bits and fragments of Joyce collected in one place, edited reliably, and placed on public record. They have been floating about for a long time, in various ill-transcribed and ill-annotated versions, like wandering rocks of Joyce scholarship. There is every reason to think they will now stay put.

Mr. Matthew Hodgart of Cambridge and Miss Mabel Worthington of Temple University have cooperated on a revealing little book about Joyce's use of song in his writing.[3] It is a reference-type book, and a useful one, if necessarily short on literary charm. About three quarters of its modest bulk is given up to a page-and-line listing of song-snatches and song-references in Joyce's works. The authors' conclusions may be put in capsule form. Over four hundred songs are referred to or quoted in *Ulysses;* rather more than this number are in *Finnegans Wake,* and in the later book they are far more deeply worked into the text. The authors have performed a vast and impressive labor in winnowing through the golden acres of music-hall song, nursery rhyme, and operatic libretto; future students of the Joyce canon will find their work indispensable. To be sure, the arrangement of materials does not help us to go beyond the dictionary itself—to see, for example, what shape Joyce imposed on his materials, or where they came from. In the Calypso episode, for instance, Bloom contaminates the text of *Là ci darem* most interestingly with another Mozart aria; but the index merely notes *Là ci darem.* For the complicated line in Scylla and Charybdis, "Cordelia. *Cordoglio.* Lir's loneliest daughter," we are referred simply to "Silent, O Moyle." A last complaint; the

[3] SONG IN THE WORK OF JAMES JOYCE, by *Matthew J. C. Hodgart* and *Mabel P. Worthington.* Columbia University Press. $6.00.

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songs are very adequately keyed to Joyce's texts, but not at all to the impressive materials of the bibliographies. A work so clearly destined for the use of students could have been rendered still more useful by adding a little extra bibliographical information to the description of each song. It is misleading, to say no more, that the *Ballad of Joking Jesus* is listed alongside the *Ballad of Agincourt* and the *Ballad of Chevy Chase,* as if all three were equally available in print.

To complete the quarter's roster of books about Joyce, Miss Sylvia Beach has published an account of her experiences as owner of Shakespeare and Co., in Paris.[4] Miss Beach is a friendly, adventurous person, far nicer than most of the haggard expatriates who collected about her little shop. She writes simply and cheerfully about what she did and what she saw going on; and the effect is just a little like a Henry James novel of later vintage, where vast and terrible events are mirrored most imperfectly in a small, unperturbed reflector. The end of her little story is not a very happy one, so far as it concerns Joyce; nor is it a very distinct one, so far as it concerns Shakespeare and Co. But the book is good clean literary namedropping and quite nicely done.

[4] SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY, by *Sylvia Beach.* Harcourt, Brace. $4.50.

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JOHN THOMPSON

For the Happy Crowd

IN HIS OWN TIME, Stendhal seemed so strange that no criticism could have helped him to find an audience; today I wonder if readers may not feel he is so familiar that no criticism is necessary. But there must be something peculiar in this. Although his books in paper backs surround us in every drug store, although books about him are not uncommon even in English, although in Martin Turnell's compendium of the views of modern criticism on French novelists he is officially shelved as the greatest of all, Stendhal retains the ability to make every reader feel one of that very small band, the happy few. Stendhal speaks directly to each of us and we do not think we need formal introductions or invitations. After all, there ought to be some books that we simply read—that we read, even, almost secretly. Yet we do not at all read these novels with the ashamed indulgence we keep for our detective books or our science fiction. Their intelligence, their darting truth that might seem to deflate but only invigorates, says privately to each of us, "Here you may have a grand sword-fight, you may make love to a beautiful woman, you may nobly defy a tyrant; but at the same time, we are not completely fools. I will show you how all this is done, but I will be watching you closely. You and I know that half your courage is either ignorance or panic, your desire is at least half of it fear or vainglory. That doesn't mean, of course, that you have to give up the sword-fight or the beautiful woman. Only those others, those shopkeepers, those bi-cameral legislators who have neither minds nor feelings, would suppose anything like that." We may recognize Stendhal as his contemporaries did not, but again I wonder if we would not prefer it to be an instantaneous and conspiratorial recognition. This is too good a friend to share with everyone. And besides, he would probably tell on us.

This is a primitive set of feelings. It lies stubbornly counter to most of the modern critical and scholarly effort of description, explication, analysis. But for Stendhal these will not do. What we want is inspired gossip, something like Stendhal himself; and something like that is what Robert M. Adams has written.[1] He conducts a dashing charge on his subject through the ranks of modern criticism, scholarship, and the traditions of the modern novel. He has no concern at all to assimilate Stendhal to the categories or tastes that rule today. He says he is out to make a sort of estimate of "the literary stature of Henri Beyle, who liked to call himself the Baron Stendhal," but if this means a balancing and weighing and an invocation of generally-accepted standards, he certainly doesn't do it. To say just what he does is not

[1] STENDHAL: NOTES ON A NOVELIST, by *Robert M. Adams*. Noonday. $4.00.

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so easy, unless it is, simply, to give us a good deal of inspired gossip.

He is disdainful of his scholarly sources but surely has them all. His style is quick and insolent; the reader must try to keep up, Adams is not going to take time to explain his ideas, or to identify names, or to analyze passages of prose and point out their felicities. He *characterizes,* in his own terms, metaphorically, impatiently, brilliantly, like the very best of gossips. "To write a slow, heavy book about a quick, light author has never seemed a profitable pastime," he says.

Light must not be misunderstood. Adams is always alert and amusing, but this trick of characterizing, fascinating and human as it is, can be hard going when it is applied to abstract thought. His description of the philosophical system of Destutt de Tracy, Stendhal's "ideologue" in so far as he had one, is a dramatic and convincing sketch, but it does not condescend to be easy. It works its way up to a full-blown rendition that ought to delight everyone who loves to think about the strange double nature of Stendhal:

> Stendhal's art, like his thought, is a *tour de force* of light and dark —a shimmering web of bright, geometrical consciousness weaving transparent patterns over the caverns of unconscious association. The picture he paints may be described as a clash of black on white, in which the clear but limited truths of ideology oppose the black, unlimited Machiavellianism of jesuitry—and out of which there strides without warning a streak and ripple of royal purple, a king's color and a kingly gesture, set unexpectedly against a sparse and angular background.

These *Notes* are probably not for the raw beginner in Stendhal. For the amateur, for anyone who has even once felt himself invited to join the happy few, they are a necessity, as of course they will be for the expert or professional Stendhalist. They rove back and forth between Beyle and Stendhal, between life and art, from one book to another, in the manner of conversation or private thought but in a highly-developed, allusive, rhetorical, and despite Adams's disclaimer, polemical style. For this is no attempt to make Stendhal "timely." And so much the worse for the times.

But the book has an interest even beyond its subject and beyond the thought in it. We might say, What is one to write? Supposing, that is, that one likes to write about books. The new criticism is lost in sands that are not even gritty any more. Scholarship, unless you care to count on some archeological strike, has to settle after immense labor for a footnote. There is very little space for intelligent literary journalism in this country. In this book there are signs of Adams's struggle with these very real problems. Scholarship he shrugs off, "the minute anything bored me, I put it down," but there were some adhesions that must have taken some tugging, I think, and maybe bled a little. The wise decision to be pleasant and quick sometimes becomes a determination to be so. And I do not like to think that this bright and

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original book will itself become a *genre*. But I might close with a quotation, so that the reader can see for himself how rapidly and surprisingly Adams can work. This is what he can do with the kind of notions about Stendhal's audience that I wrote down at the beginning of this brief notice. He is speaking here about Stendhal's ability to make us accept as essentially noble the escapades of Julien and Fabrizio.

> The upright reader, who feels himself insidiously led astray by this one-man conspiracy, so reminiscent of that involving the king's new clothes, may of course stand on his self-importance and resist. If he wishes to cry out that the Stendhal hero is a scamp and a scapegrace, the grounds for saying so are made painfully available to him —simply, the author is clearly in agreement with his happy few that something can be seen in Fabrizio and Julien which renders all these conventional moral judgements quite meaningless. The happy few are an invention for surrounding the reader, a sounding-board which makes the price of independent judgement nothing less than priggishness, a silent claque whose secret rapport with the author disarms the reader's doubts and relieves the author of the ugly need for emphasis and explanation. Stendhal's wonderful dry lightness and swiftness of touch is thus sustained by a masking, not of the novelist but of the audience. They must be seen through the image of Mme. Roland; and, being seen through that image, they may, if they want to, learn what it means to look back on life with the eyes of a heroine. The Stendhal audience is always implicitly feminine; there is always an assumption that it is, or can be if it wants, not only "natural" but "natural" in a special dimension, that is, "sublime."

LOUIS SIMPSON

Rehabilitations of an Angel

THERE SEEMS TO BE a Shelley revival. As every student knows, Shelley has been confined in recent years to the Siberia of criticism. When T. S. Eliot quoted a stanza of *To a Skylark* and said that he could not understand it, thousands of acolytes were struck with a sudden, divine stupidity; they could make no sense of Shelley's simplest words. Leavis has performed much the same service for readers of the *Ode to the West Wind*. Ransom points to the abstraction of Shelley's universe, the lack of texture in his descriptions. On the other side there have been defenders and apologists, a strangely mixed crew that includes Yeats and E. M. Forster; but not until now has any large attempt been made to examine Shelley's poetry in the mass and in detail.

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But now sympathetic critics, armed in full panoply, are rushing to his help.[1] Earl Wasserman, in *The Subtler Language,* has performed what seems the proper work of criticism by analyzing certain of Shelley's poems thoroughly and showing what meanings and overtones Shelley may be supposed to have had in mind when he wrote them. Mr. Wasserman writes clearly and sensibly, so that when, for example, he arrives at the conclusion that *Adonais* has "a self-contained mode of poetic activity, inevitable and organic," we are ready to agree. In *Shelley's Mythmaking* Mr. Harold Bloom has carried out with immense labor and weight of scholarship a survey of Shelley's ideas with reference to the philosophy of Martin Buber. Mr. Milton Wilson, in *Shelley's Later Poetry,* uses *Prometheus Unbound* as a point of departure for excursions into Shelley's other works, in various directions. The dust is rising from the quadrangle, and there in the middle stands "Mad" Shelley with a nosebleed.

It is certainly possible to make out a case, as Mr. Wilson and Mr. Bloom have done, for Shelley as a metaphysician, and we know that Shelley sometimes liked to think of himself in this way. But it may be a mistake to read him too closely. To suggest that poems may not be read closely verges on blasphemy in this Age of Criticism; nevertheless, certain works are more effective as a whole than in detail, and I believe that Shelley's are among them. It seems unnecessarily ingenious to regard every turn and twist of his verse as advancing an idea or representing some aspect of a mythology. The critical tools that may be applied to Donne cannot be applied, without a distortion of the material itself, to the verse of Shelley—nor can they be applied to the verse of Keats, or Coleridge, or Byron. These poets often wrote for an immediate effect, and any inconsistency that might rise from this practice was itself a desired effect. In Shelley's *Epipsychidion,* the poet's dream-world of two compatible spirits collapses even as the poet constructs it; in Keats' odes, the poet's perceptions of beauty and his sense of his own identity are irreconcilably opposed. The anti-Romantic critics have supposed that the poets were not aware of such contradictions; now, it seems, other critics will attempt to show that the contradictions were resolved. But the truth is, perhaps, that the force of romantic poetry is found in those moments when ideas and emotions collide.

I must admit to having read Shelley more simply than Mr. Bloom or Mr. Wilson, for I have come away with the belief that there are two main concepts which explain everything of importance he ever wrote: the imagination as supreme power, and non-violence as the most practical politics—in short, views of Socrates and Jesus, the heroes of *The Triumph of Life.* I am not persuaded by his defenders that these are insufficient ideas and that more complicated explanations, relying on fidelity to every turn of the text, will render us a truer understanding

[1] THE SUBTLER LANGUAGE, by *Earl R. Wasserman.* Johns Hopkins Press. $6.00.
SHELLEY'S MYTHMAKING, by *Harold Bloom.* Yale University Press. $5.00.
SHELLEY'S LATER POETRY, by *Milton Wilson.* Columbia University Press. $6.00.

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of Shelley. In both Mr. Bloom's and Mr. Wilson's books I feel that there has been a scholastic fault, that the authors were seeking after impressive ways of dealing with their material, rather than seeking to clarify. Mr. Bloom's analysis of Shelley's mythology with reference to Buber is, in some ways, an astonishing undertaking; it disposes of chronology and suggests that Buber's twentieth-century concepts subsume those of an early nineteenth-century poet. Mr. Bloom's style, unfortunately, is ponderous; at times it seems that sledgehammers are descending on Shelley's tenuous, abstracted lines. Mr. Wilson's arrangement, continually departing from and returning to *Prometheus Unbound,* also has disadvantages. The reader is, as it were, leaving the train at every station to take a short walk, and keeping an ear cocked for the train whistle.

In the adverse criticisms of Shelley there has always been an element of personal dislike, masked as contempt. This is natural enough, for Shelley is one of the very few revolutionaries who have written in English, and the study of literature is a middle-class occupation. Shelley is against all institutions and traditions. He still is sending his paper boats, filled with incendiary gospel, down the stream. He is still deserting his wife and recommending polygamy. He is still physically alarming, with his elongated body and wild look, and his, in all probability, clammy hands. He is the kind of poet, as he was a boy, to be set upon by bullies; and, most angering of all, he will not hit back. Matthew Arnold, that depressed inspector of schools, spoke for all policemen everywhere when he said of Shelley and his friends, "What a set!"

The point on which criticism scarcely touches—and yet it is this that has enabled Shelley to survive, and puts his book into the hands of the young—is the movement of his poetry. He was able to generate rhythms of feeling in verse, a breathtaking impulsion, a lyrical frenzy. In reading Shelley we are often exasperated and tempted to say what Marianne Moore has said of poetry in general: "I too dislike it." And it may be that to dislike Shelley's poetry is to confess that we dislike poetry. I am not sure that the reader who rejects *Prometheus Unbound* or *The Ode to the West Wind* or *To a Skylark* is able to understand lyrical verse of the highest order; he may be a good religionist or historian of ideas, but he may be a poor reader of verse. Shelley's poetry lacks all but one quality, music; yet, possessing that, it has the essential virtue of poetry, the quality without which all other qualities are futile. His works are nothing but poetry in the most popular, and also perhaps the only definitive sense, a music of language, poetry as it may be composed by angels, devoid of the intelligence of the world. He was, as Arnold said, "a beautiful *and ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." But to what purpose should angels beat their wings? After all, they are not mailmen. Shelley will never have a job in the Ministry of Culture. His poetry remains an end in itself; we may prefer not to read it, but we cannot destroy it, nor can we construct from it an absolute metaphysical system.

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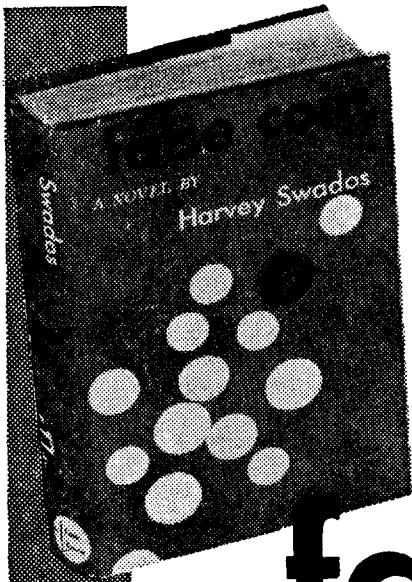

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